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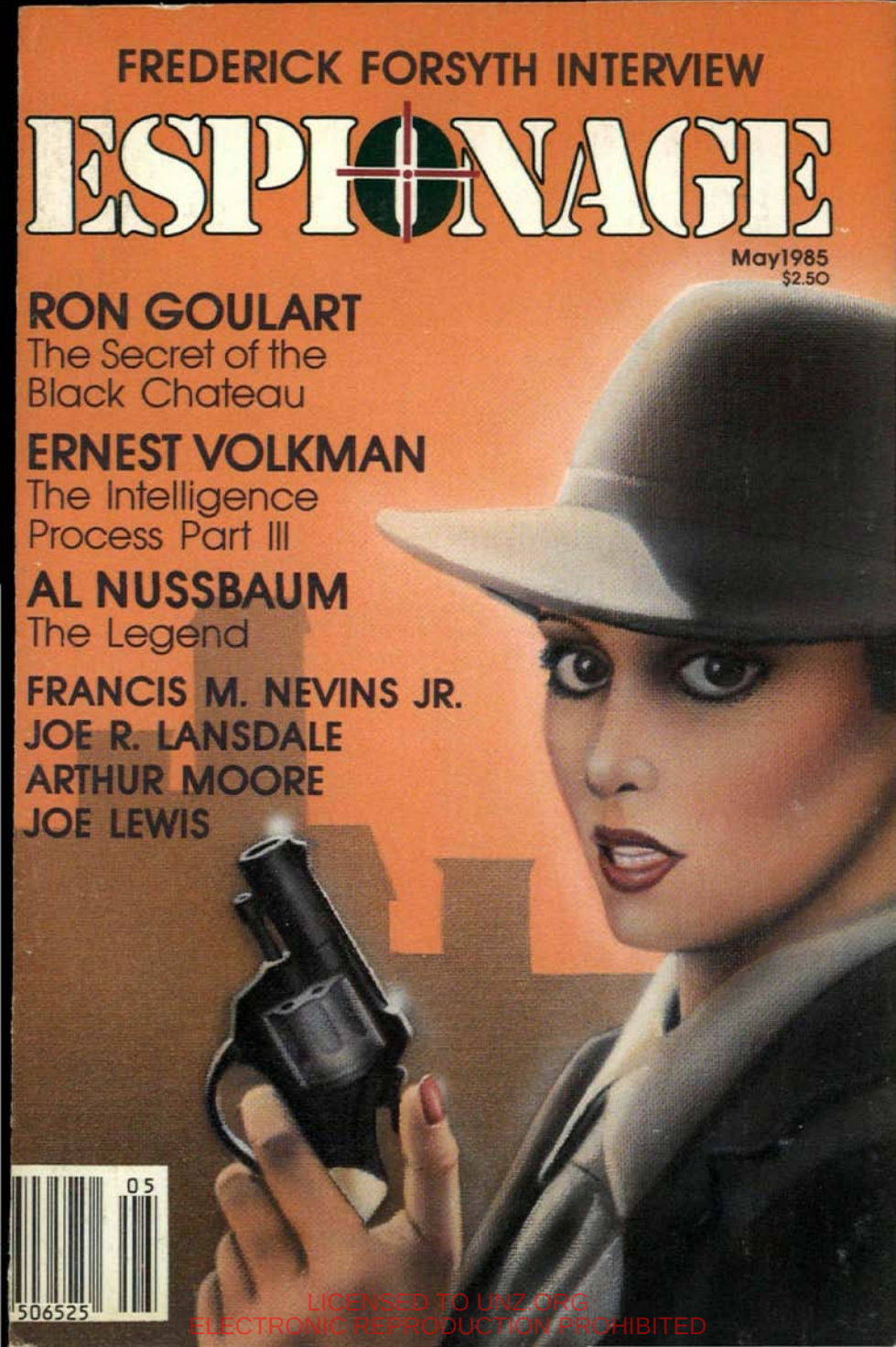

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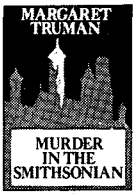

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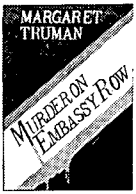

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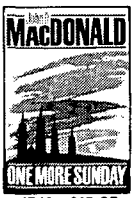

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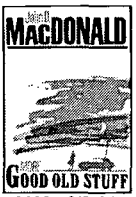

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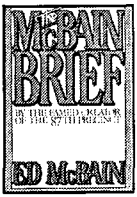

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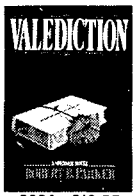

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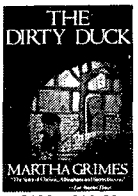

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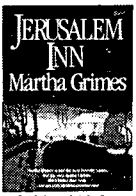

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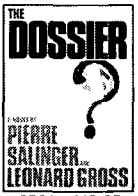

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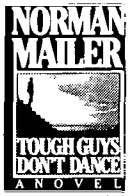

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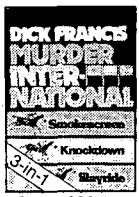

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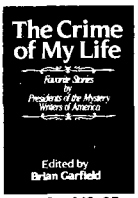

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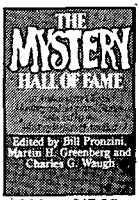

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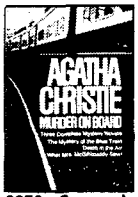

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ESPIONAGE MAGAZINE

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MAY 1985

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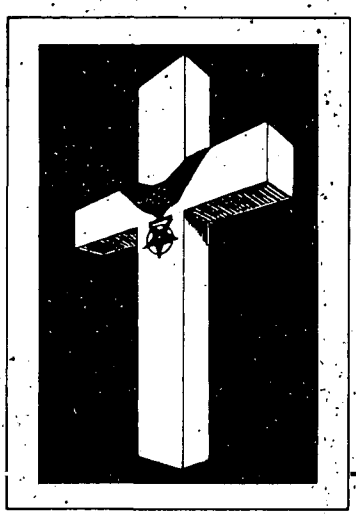

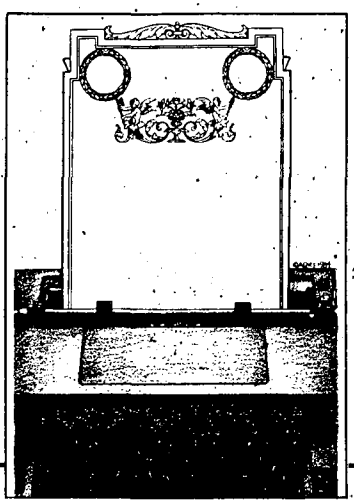

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ABOUT PEOPLE

RON GOULART, one of our science-fiction writers, has done more than his share of writing. His over forty short stories have appeared in Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine and Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine, as well as others — including Omni — and he has also written five mystery and many science fiction novels. While using several pennames, Goulart has written dozens of other mystery and sci-fi stories. Mr. Goulart is the chairman of the Mystery Writers of America's Short Story Committee.

FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR., is a Professor of Law at St. Louis University, and the author/editor of a number of critical mystery genre works, chief among them "The Mystery Writer's Art" (1970) and the Edgar winning "Royal Bloodline" (1974). He has also written many short stories and novels.

PHOTO BY PATRICIA M. HOCH

EDWARD D. HOCH is a prolific writer who has had over 500 short stories published, mostly in the crime genre. The former president of the Mystery Writers of America, Ed has appeared in every issue of ESPIONAGE Magazine and is instrumental in assisting the publishers to find writers for their new magazine.

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ERNEST VOLKMAN is a writer of intelligence and national security affairs, whose work has appeared in a wide variety of publications. Currently a Contributing Editor to *Penthouse* Magazine, where he handles national security investigations, his reports on intelligence technology also appear in Military Science and Technology and Defense Science Magazines. A former prize-winning National Editor and National Correspondent for Newsday, Volkman is the author of Legacy of Hate, published in 1982. The Devil's Sabbath, his history of American intelligence operations, will be published by Morrow early in 1985.

ESTHER JANE NEELY, presently living in southern California, is apparently always working on one story or another. She has had her work appear in many publications, journals, periodicals, and anthologies. Her educational background consists of time spent at both the University of Pittsburgh and Southern Methodist University. Recently, a copy of one of her books was released for printing in Yugoslavia.

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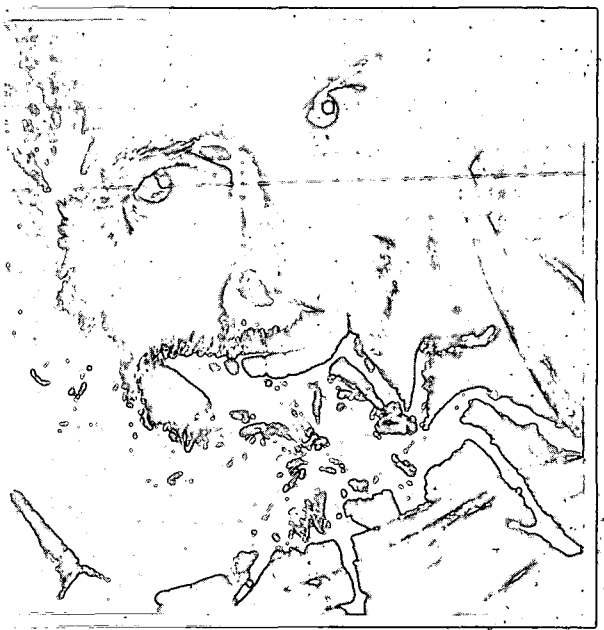
TAKE A NEW LOOK



AT THE PHENOMENA OF LIFE.
THE GOOD, BAD, BEAUTIFUL, AND UGLY.
THE NATURAL, UNNATURAL, AND SUPERNATURAL.
THE HEROIC AND VILLAINOUS.
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ABOUT BOOKS

by Brian L. Burley
Brian Burley reviews books for "The Light Show" WBAI-FM, NY, NY.

THE WRATH TO COME/THE GREAT IMPERSONATION, by E. Phillips Oppenheim. Published by Leete's Island Books, New Haven, CT, 1984. Trade PB, 524 pp.

These two novels by "the prince of storytellers," originally published in 1920 and 1924, have a very curious flavor. Both are well written, but many unfamiliar little turns of style may cause the modern reader to hesitate before continuing.

This is particularly true of THE WRATH TO COME, a story set in 1950, far in the future from the time when the book was written. It is not the 1950 we knew. This world is governed by an agreement called "The Limitation of Armaments." All major European and Asian powers are members of the Pact of Nations, created in 1930. The United States, though an adherent of "The Limitation of Armaments," is not a member of the Pact, and so is open to attack by any Pact member. Of course, Germany, Russia, and Japan are planning just that. It is up to millionaire American agent Grant Slattery, and his faithful sidekick, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, to stop them.

The novel is an idealistic one, set in a more gentlemanly era than our own. The characters are wealthy, noble or both. The feel is more reminiscent of a contemporary romance novel than an espionage novel. The political speculation is such that it could also be called a science fiction utopia novel.

In the same vein, THE GREAT IMPERSONATION could be called a ghost story, even though the subject is political intrigue in the 1913-1914 period. The story begins when Sir Everard Dominey en-

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counters his college friend and doppleganger, Leopold von Ragastein, in the African bush. The two men share a few days of friendly companionship, bringing each other up to date on their lives, then go their separate ways. But only one ever makes it back to Europe.

The ending is a happy one: good triumphs, and almost all mysteries are revealed. It also includes one of the best dispositions of the problem of a haunted woods I've seen in a while. I enjoyed this one in spite of its age.

If you can enjoy good story-telling, despite archaic style and social values, you might find this book worth your time.

THE MOURNING AFTER, by Harold Q. Masur. Published by St. Martin's Press, New York, NY, September 1984. HB, 222 pp.

Harold Masur has made a convert. It is rare that an author and character inspire me to seek out other books in a series. Masur's THE MOURNING AFTER is one of those cases.

THE MOURNING AFTER features lawyer-detective Scott Jordan, a man knowledgable and competent not only in the arcane universe of the law, but also in the real world of human interactions.

In this case, Jordan's friend and client, prestigious art dealer Victor Maxim, dies of a heart attack while on a business trip. No one expects any complications, but then an exploding safe-deposit box is not part of the normal routine of probating a will. Soon, Jordan is up to his ears in a mystery involving another murder, major art forgery, an "ugly Japanese" businessman and a fishy fellow lawyer.

Jordan eventually clears up his mystery in a way that satisfies everyone except the perpetrators. Refreshingly unlike many fictional detectives, he employs no physical violence, and solves his case using clues that were at least partially visible to the reader. I thought I had it figured out four chapters before the end – motive, method and opportunity. But one final twist ruined all that! His solution was better than mine, too, and all very logical in retrospect. This is the mark of a great detective story.

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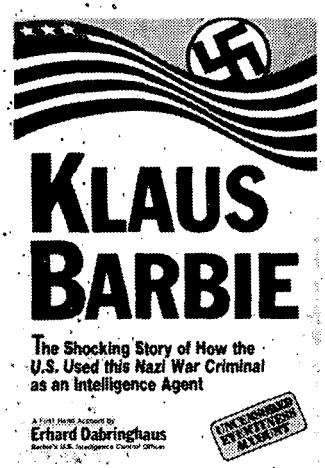
I don't think it will be ranked among the world's classics of literature, but it did provide me with some of the most enjoyable hours of reading I've had in some time. Read it. I recommend it.



KLAUS BARBIE, by Erhard Dabringhaus. Published by Acropolis Books, Ltd., Washington, D.C., 1984. HB, 208 pp.

This non-fiction book, subtitled "The Shocking Story of How the U.S. Used this Nazi War Criminal as an Intelligence Agent," shows that truth is nastier than fiction.

After the German surrender, French forces hunted Barbie, the notorious "Butcher of Lyons." Barbie evaded justice by making himself an indispensable part of the American post-war intelligence system. There, he used the inexperience and confusion he found to play department against department; perhaps he even murdered another former German officer who might have revealed his record. When Dabringhaus, Barbie's U.S. intelligence control officer, discovered Barbie's past activities and resigned his position in protest, his reports to higher headquarters describing those activities were inexplicably lost, possibly through the actions of Barbie or a confederate.

Barbie worked longer for American intelligence than he did for the Nazis, but in 1951, his usefulness ended. He and his family were smuggled from Germany to Bolivia, where, typically, he engaged in the cocaine trade and international armament sales, and trained paramilitary troops for various Bolivian dictators. Although Bolivia has no extradition treaty with France, in 1983 Barbie was arrested and, through an irregular procedure, turned over to the French. He is now awaiting trial.

This book doesn't call itself an "Authorized Account," but it feels like one, drawing heavily on formerly classified documents, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, for authentification. But these documents show evidence of censorship, especially in the deletion of certain names. Dabringhaus says that he feels the complete story is not yet out. From my reading, I get the same

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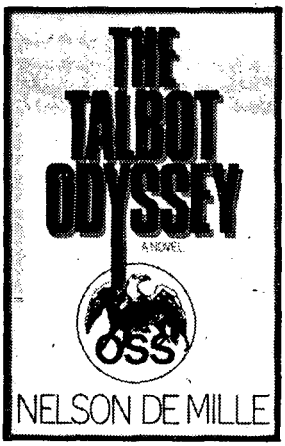
impression. I also wonder if Dabringhaus is telling us everything he knows, or if he is rather preparing us for more serious revelations later on this year when Barbie finally goes on trial in France.



THE TALBOT ODYSSEY, by Nelson De Mille. Published by Delacorte Press, New York, NY, 1984, 422 pp.

I must admit to a fondness for complex plots, in which nothing is quite the way it seems. I was disappointed in that respect by THE TALBOT ODYSSEY. The plot is straightforward, and we meet most of the major characters early in the book. Since the story is not told from the viewpoint of any one character, we soon have a pretty good idea who the good guys and the villains are. After that, we sit back and watch the protagonist gradually work his way through the mystery, save the world, get the girl, and, incidentally, leave a long trail of corpses behind him.

This is not to say there are no surprises in the book. The identities of the principal villains, in particular, are revealed gradually, as are some of the motives of the characters.

The plot concerns an attempt by the Soviet Union to conquer the United States, with a secret weapon against which we have no defense, a weapon they in fact are known to be developing. The book is set in New York City and Glen Cove, Long Island, where the Russian mission to the United Nations maintains a retreat. Many well-known people play minor roles in the book, including the mayor of Glen Cove, whose hostility to the Soviets causes frequent newspaper headlines and headaches to the State Department.

The characters, particularly the protagonist, Tony Abrams, an ex-policeman turned lawyer, are well-drawn. Where they represent stereotypes, as many of them do, the stereotypes are splendid examples of the type. A couple of the characters even lie to the reader on a few occasions, providing hints of the complexity I was seeking.

This is a well-written tale, though not quite what I was expecting from the jacket blurbs, and worth spending an evening or two with.

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ABOUT FILMS by Brian L. Burley

Many of the people who liked Stanley Kubrick's "2001, A SPACE ODYSSEY," based on a short story by Arthur C. Clarke, will be disappointed with the sequel, 2010 (subtitled "the year we made contact"). Kubrick and Clarke, working together, struck a balance between the technology and the transcendental. 2001 had a feeling of almost religious awe to it. Clarke without Kubrick merely gives us technology and demystification, with only a few moments evoking the wonder of the first film.

As Clarke and director Peter Hyams have it, the Russians are ahead in the race to send a second manned expedition to Jupiter. The LEONOV is ready to leave, while the American effort is several years behind. But only the Americans have the key to DISCOVERY and the knowledge to re-activate HAL 9000 and find out what really happened. So a joint expedition is mounted. The crew of the LEONOV includes Dr. Haywood Floyd, the space agency director responsible for the DISCOVERY expedition (played by Roy Scheider), and Drs. Chandra (Bob Balaban) and Curnow (John Lithgow) to provide technical support.

LEONOV contacts DISCOVERY, where the Americans find that HAL 9000's problem was simply a programming conflict and not related to anything else that happened. Meanwhile, the international situation on Earth, seemingly unchanged from that of 1984, has flared up. As a result, the three Americans are ordered to remove themselves from LEONOV, and to have no further contact with the Russians. But the creators of the Black Monolith, the study of which had been the object of LEONOV's mission, have plans of their own. Soon the American and Russian crews are faced with the choice of cooperation or death.

This is an action film which relies on special effects, most of which are well done. The result is flawed, for me at least, by the fact that some of what is portrayed is not technically accurate. For instance, were Jupiter to be turned into a sun, as in the film, it would not show a disk from Earth's surface and would probably not be bright enough for the narrator to develop nostalgia for the time when there was night.

But all of these are minor quibbles. If you can separate this film from its predecessor, suspend your disbelief, and enjoy an action/adventure movie with a high technological base, or if, like

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me, you thought the light show in 2001 was too long and too inconclusive, you might enjoy 2010 in spite of its flaws. I did.

John Le Carre's 1983 bestseller, THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL, loses something in its translation to film. Le Carre goes for complexity; his readers are never quite sure what is going on until they reach the end. This is especially true of THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL, in which one of the themes is the nature of reality. In contrast, the movie version is straightforward. Everything is presented in sequence; everything is easily understood. The film holds the viewer's attention, but, except for a few scenes, does not make one think or feel.

Diane Keaton plays Charlie, an actress whose grip on reality is weak to begin with. Charlie espouses fashionable causes, currently the Palestinian movement. She is spotted by Israeli agents who think they can use her to lead them to an important terrorist leader; to attract her, "Joseph," played by Yorgo Voyagis, pretends to be a dashing Palestinian terrorist. She is kidnapped, then brainwashed into working for the Israelis. Until she meets a darkly romantic Palestinian... All Charlie wants to do is help "stop the killing," so she is utterly unprepared to work with professionals of either side.

Director George Ray Hill has created a fine film of international action and intrigue, sticking to the bare bones of Charlie's story. The reader/viewer must be cautioned, however, to take the film on its own terms, and not to expect the depths of Le Carre. With that caveat in mind, I recommend the film.

ABOUT TV

Scarecrow and Mrs. King, CBS-TV, Monday, 8:00 PM EST (60 minutes).

This is the second year of programming for this show, a generally enjoyable TV hour for those of us who like to see spies in action. Scarecrow (otherwise known as Lee Stetson) is a bona-fide United States spy employed by an initialed espionage group in Washington D.C. He works closely with Amanda King, a suburban single-parent of two boys, who though untrained seems often to be needed to work alongside Scarecrow.

The actors in this show are a delight, particularly Kate Jackson,

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who has a knack for becoming totally whatever role she assumes. Co-star Bruce Boxleitner (whose hair-stylist I'd like to strangle) is always in character, too, although I think the writers of S&MK have shortchanged him, giving him a one-dimensional personality: a professional who reluctantly works with a non-professional. Amanda is, at least, a mother, a daughter (to wonderful Beverly Garland), a sometimes-klutz, a friend, a community contributor and a romantic admirer of Scarecrow.

The stories broadcast each week are, in the main, plausible; not too bloody, or silly, although occasionally they fall into the "If Borisov isn't stopped, it will be the end of the free world as we know it " cliche that spoils the show and could, in time, chase away viewers. Several things might improve this program, if I may suggest them — although I must admit to being an avid viewer, flaws and all: 1- a resolution of the Scarecrow/Mrs. King personal relationship (on or off), 2- a fleshing-out of Scarecrow's character, making him multi-dimensional, 3- fewer "save the world" crises, 4- more development of the two major secondary roles, Billy Melrose and Francine, giving Melrose the intelligence and authority his position in the Agency warrants, and making Francine less of a haughty snot - as is, I can't imagine why anyone wants to work with the bitch, 5- and a greater appreciation and/or respect for this program's viewers. While this is the only TV espionage game in town, if it isn't shaped up, well...there's at least one magazine we know of that could fill the gap!

ABOUT OTHER THINGS...

Rudolf Abel was revealed to be the director of soviet espionage in the United States as the result of a fluke. In the early fifties, a Brooklyn newspaper boy received a nickel in change from one of his customers, that felt too light to be real. It eventually turned up in the hands of a New York City policeman, when the boy discovered its hollow center containing microfilm. The NYPD turned the nickel and microfilm over to the FBI, who held it until a defecting soviet spy,

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Reino Hayhanen, decoded the numbers listed on the strip of film. Abel was arrested and charged as a result. (The Big Brother Book of Lists. Price/Stern/Sloan 1984)

★★★★

Bet you didn't know that a Communist is easy to spot! According to Citizen Hoover (Nelson-Hall, 1972), card-carrying communists tend to 1- drive alternately at high and low rates of speed, 2- enter a heavily traveled intersection on a yellow light, hoping to lose any follower or cause an accident, 3- turn corners at high rates of speed and stop abruptly, 4- suddenly leave a car and walk hurriedly down a one-way street in the direction in which vehicle traffic is prohibited, 5- enter a dark street in a residential area at night, make a sharp U-turn, cut into a side alley, and extinguish the car's lights, 6- drive in rural areas, take a long walk in a field, then have another car meet them, 7- wait until the last minute, then make a sharp left turn in front of oncoming traffic, and 8- stop at every filling station on the highway, walk around the car, always looking, then go on. (Sounds like all the teenagers, illicit lovers, and elderly people in America!)

★★★★

Want to be a spy? According to Allen Dulles (The Craft of Intelligence. Harper & Row, 1962), there are eleven characteristics essential to a good intelligence officer: 1- being perceptive about people, 2- being able to work well with others under difficult conditions, 3- learning to discern between fact and fiction, 4- being able to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials, 5- possessing inquisitiveness, 6- having a large amount of ingenuity, 7- paying appropriate attention to detail, 8- being able to express ideas clearly, briefly and interestingly, 9- not being overambitious for personal reward in the form of fame or fortune, 10- having an understanding for other points of view, 11- learning when to keep your mouth shut.

★★★★

The Seven Sins of
Strategic Intelligence are

1. Failure to provide policymakers with objective, uninhibited intelligence.
2. Disregard of objective intelligence by policymakers.
3. Indiscriminate collection of intelligence.
4. Indiscriminate use of covert action.
5. Inadequate protection of officers and agents abroad.
6. Muddled counterintelligence.
7. Inadequate accountability in the intelligence chain of command. (World Affairs, Fall 1983).

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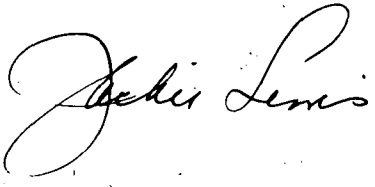
PUBLISHER'S PAGE

As is true of a human being, a magazine is conceived, born, and shaped by its environment. At maturity, the magazine — like the human — emerges somewhat as its parents envisioned it would, but not really *exactly* as had been expected.

While ESPIONAGE is nowhere near maturity — indeed, it is still an infant — I can already see it beginning to deviate from the vision I originally held. And it is deviating as a result of the stories we receive from writers. Their vision of espionage is more encompassing than mine. They suggest assassination, terrorism, agent provocateurs; our issues begin to include these subjects.

As you begin to write to us, telling us what you like and what you don't like, our infant publication will develop in other ways. Your active participation in this way will help to shape the story topic selection process in ESPIONAGE until, eventually, our magazine will be full-grown.

Just as we welcome new ideas from our writers, so also do we welcome them from you. I believe that, together, we can develop a magazine that will excite and satisfy even the most avid spy enthusiasts. Let us hear from you soon.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I would like to add a few points of clarification to Mr. Volkman's excellent article, "The Intelligence Process," which appeared in your first issue. I enjoyed the piece very much, but think Mr. Volkman unintentionally confused two different German small-arm anti-tank weapons, the panzerfaust and the panzerschreck.

Panzerfausts were in use on the Eastern Front in the late summer of 1942. They were a one-shot weapon, a metal tube to guide a high explosive charge to the target. The gunpowder propellant was packed in the tube behind the charge. When the trigger was pulled, the panzerfaust delivered what amounted to a huge exploding bullet. When the charge was fired, the worthless tube was discarded.

The Germans first encountered the American bazooka in the late autumn of 1942, in North Africa. Some were captured and the Germans made their own bazookas, called panzerschrecks. Like the bazooka, the panzerschreck was a mini rocket launcher that could be reloaded time after time. The shell it fired was a mini rocket, with the propellant packed within the shell itself.

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Panzerschrecks were first issued to the German army in July 1943, and became very scarce as the war went on. The Panzerfausts, however, were easy to make and they were produced in staggering quantities toward the end of the war.

The official designation of the American bazooka was "Launcher, Rocket, 2.36 Inch Anti-Tank, M-1." This weapon came to be known as the "bazooka," because it reminded G.I.s of a certain comedian's fearsome and complicated, musical wind instrument when fired. Bob Burns called his contraption a "bazooka."

I have read other accounts wherein the two weapons are lumped together under the same name of panzerfaust, and they were generally written by non-Americans. For some reason, British and European writers do not bother to make the careful distinction, but as you can see, without the distinction the facts do not correlate.

Best of luck with your new magazine.

M.M. Miller

To the Editor,

Enjoyed the first issue of ESPIONAGE but I believe one of the stories included an error.

Although Winds of Change is set in the year 1941, reference is made to Richard Widmark, who made his first major movie appearance in "KISS OF DEATH" some time in 1946-47.

Henry M. Pech
Berwyn, IL

Dear Jeri:

A pleasure meeting you in Chicago, and in seeing ESPIONAGE off to a flying start.

I mailed a letter to the fan in Illinois who noted that I'd mentioned Richard Widmark in a story set in 1941. Right he is; though Widmark acted prior to KISS OF DEATH, I don't suppose he could have been considered a star until the postwar years (I'll concede this even though Eric Estrada is considered a star). Anyway, my error. Amends made.

With all best wishes.

John Lutz

Dear Ms. Lewis:

Congratulations on the new magazine! The first issue was superb, something an old-time spy buff really enjoys. Keep up the same level of performance with later issues and you should really take off!

Now, after the praise, always come the brickbats. Hey, a silenced revolver (p.117)?! I hate telling you this, but as a knowledgeable person about the subject of military (and other) small arms, I can assure you that the "silenced revolver" is a product of the

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(201) 569-0886
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fevered imagination of either writers who didn't bother to investigate their subject or Hollywood sound stages.

Remember, the art of developing an effective suppressor (modern term) is the art of lessening the report of the fired cartridge. Essentially, the report you hear when a rifle or pistol is fired is the combination of the sound of the exploding powder in the cartridge (i.e., the combustion gases leave the barrel in excess of the speed of sound) and of the supersonic passage of the bullet itself. This means that a suppressed weapon should be in a caliber that is normally subsonic (or the user selects a specially-loaded subsonic round) and that the weapon is modified so no powder gasses can escape from the weapon and generate noise. This last criterium rules almost all revolvers out from consideration, except a Russian Mosin-Nagant of pre-WWI vintage which is unsuited for far too many reasons to list, because the revolver principle mechanically depends on the device of having a gap between cylinder and barrel to function; thus, the mere presence of the gap allows gas to escape, and therefore makes the process of suppressing a revolver useless at best, hopeless at worst.

Incidentally, the Hollywood idea of a suppressed weapon making virtually no report is nonsense. The best weapon of its kind, a deLisle carbine, has a report on the

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order of about 90 db, the same as a jackhammer; however, downrange, and even in the close proximity of the weapon — about ten feet — the sound is negligable. Given the supposed range at which a Hollywood assassin uses his weapon, the noise heard by the viewer would be far greater than the sound stage artists would have us believe. Suppressors are really designed to greatly reduce the target's probability of hearing the sound, and lessen the bystanders' chance of hearing the shot as well.

Other than that small objection, I thoroughly enjoyed the new magazine. Long may you publish.

Sincerely,
Robert C. Smith
New Jersey

Dear Editor,

I realize that your magazine is new and you have little or no control over the writers of your stories. And most all of them were pretty good stories. Except one, "The Knack," on page 115 of issue one, which included something that I'd seen on television, but could do nothing about until now.

At the end of the story, he says, "But the bag burst with a spray of popcorn and the golden flame of a silenced revolver."

Now, we all know that a silencer on a revolver would be useless because of the sound; most of the sound would come out the cylinder, not the barrel. But, hey, we're all entitled to a few mistakes. (I notice I've made quite a few.) But that one has bugged me for a long time.

By the way, I love your magazine. Keep up the good work.

David Marsh
Washington, PA

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on the premiere issue of ESPIONAGE magazine. At long last the void has been filled for those of us who do not have the time for novels.

I proudly congratulate you and your company on this very worthy publication.

Best wishes for continued success.

William T. Godbey
West Palm Beach, FL

Dear Editor,

I recently bought your first issue of ESPIONAGE Magazine and I really enjoyed it. I'm looking forward to the next issue. I also really enjoyed Secret Codes and Ciphers. I can't seem to break Cipher #1. Would you please send me the solution? Will you print one each time your magazine comes out? If so, please give one or two clues to the key. Anxiously awaiting your reply.

Steve Uptain
Memphis, TN

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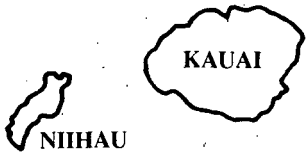

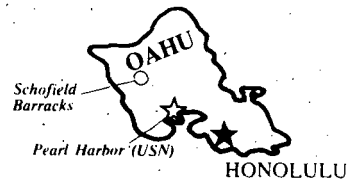

THE INTELLIGENCE PROCESS Part III

by Ernest Volkman

Any review of intelligence would not be complete, of course, without mention of the one single event that stands to this day as the worst intelligence failure in all history: the attack on Pearl Harbor. That event dominates the psyche of modern American intelligence, since this is an age where "surprise attack" means an intercontinental missile that takes only 15 minutes to reach its target.

The circumstances of the Pearl Harbor attack have been sifted and resifted: why did we miss it? How could we have done so badly? How could the attack have taken place without warning, despite the fact that we had broken the Japanese codes? How was it possible for an entire Japanese naval task force to sail undetected near Hawaii, then sail away unmolested? The events in retrospect are so incredible, they have spawned a thriving cottage industry in exhaustive detailing of the events, along with a minor subsidiary seeking to prove the surprise was no surprise at all, but the result of Rooseveltian perfidy.

The belief that the Pearl Harbor attack amounted to a conspiracy directed by President Roosevelt illustrates again the problem of how preconceptions can refuse to recognize the incontrovertible facts at hand. The belief rests on the assumption, a prevailing one in many quarters, that American intelligence had full and adequate

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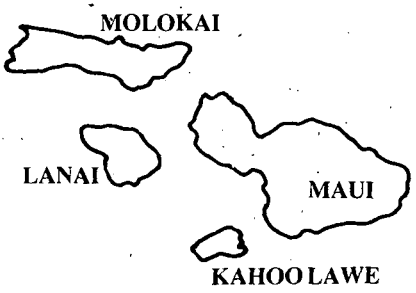
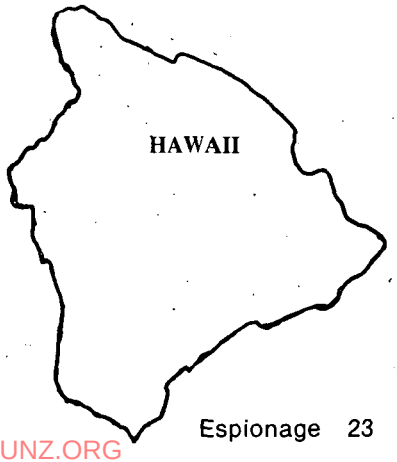


warning that the Japanese were about to attack; ergo, the lack of defensive preparations at Pearl Harbor was the result of a conscious conspiracy by Roosevelt to directly involve this country in World War II. But the belief that the United States had full warning is not true. The facts surrounding American intelligence's performance before Pearl Harbor have been extensively analyzed, but consider a few aspects which are not generally known:

1. It is true that there was plenty of strategic warning about an immi-



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nent Japanese strike against the United States, including a bellicose (and government-controlled) Japanese press. But it is generally forgotten that at the same time, Roosevelt sought to avoid any accidental Japanese-American clash that might precipitate war. One of his moves had far-reaching consequences: he ordered American shipping in the Pacific re-routed through the Torres Straits (between New Guinea and Australia) and away from the sea lanes north and northwest of Hawaii, where most Japanese shipping moved. That meant a cut-off of a standard intelligence resource on the Japanese Navy: visual sighting from American ships moving in the same sea lanes. It was in those sea lanes north of Hawaii that the Japanese Pearl Harbor task force sailed, unobserved.

2. It is true that the United States had managed to crack the high-level Japanese codes, but this amazing operation produced raw intelligence which was not analyzed for meaning by American intelligence, which lacked any sort of central agency to coordinate and analyze all intelligence. Thus, much of the intercepted material amounted to raw intelligence that could be sensational on occasion, but was very often fragmentary.

3. It is true that American Intelligence had expended great effort in divining the Japanese military, but much of that analysis was shallow. One key failure was in missing an important Japanese weapon development: new torpedos equipped with special fins to carry out attacks against shipping in shallow water, where ships normally considered themselves safe against conventional deep-depth torpedos. The main reason American battleships were lined up like sitting ducks at Pearl Harbor was not because Roosevelt was deliberately offering them as targets, but because the U.S. Navy was convinced that no current torpedo could be launched in Pearl Harbor's shallow waters. The Americans had also missed the significance of a new Japanese fighter plane known as the Zero. Far superior to any American fighter then flying, the Zero had been first introduced in China in 1940, when it shot down 27 Chinese fighters in its first battle. An alarmed General Claire Chennault, then commander of the "Flying Tigers," American volunteer pilots in China, warned Washington about the new plane, but his reports were discounted. The failure not only had repercussions at Pearl Harbor, where the Zeros ruled the skies, but later in the Philippines, where they decimated U.S. planes, stripping American forces of air support.

4. It is true that American intelligence had carefully studied the lessons to be drawn from fighting in Europe and China. Again, however, much of the analysis was shallow. The U.S. Navy, for example, failed to heed the lesson of the British attack on the Italian harbor of Taranto in November, 1940, when obsolete

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British planes still managed to cripple an entire Italian fleet at anchor in shallow waters. The attack was intensively studied by the Japanese, who worked out the operational plan for Pearl Harbor based on what they had learned about Taranto. But the Americans failed to understand that fleets of ships jammed together in shallow harbors, even under the protection of anti-aircraft guns, were easy prey for air power. Pearl Harbor's defenses, designed for the days when the chief threats were submarines and enemy war fleets, were not upgraded to handle modern air attack.*

5. It is true that the American diplomatic and military attache staff in Japan was alert before Pearl Harbor in reporting any sign of imminent hostilities, but their vision was circumscribed. Unlike the Russians, whose high-level spy, Richard Sorge, was able to deliver intelligence to Stalin on the innermost secrets of the Japanese high command, the Americans had no such sources. Thus, they were reduced to reading the surface signs, making them vulnerable to a number of deception measures the Japanese carried out to conceal the Pearl Harbor operation. One was the ostentatious granting of shore leave by the Japanese Navy to large numbers of sailors in the port of Yokohama. The sight of so many sailors on liberty caused American military attaches to conclude that no large Japanese naval operation was imminent. In fact, the Japanese had gathered large groups of sailors from other units not involved in the Pearl Harbor operation and let them loose in Yokohama to lead the Americans to just that conclusion.

The lessons of these World War II intelligence failures have been the subject of much study, especially in the United States. The chief conclusion has been the necessity for centralized intelligence agencies, prototypically the CIA, that can process myriad pieces of raw intelligence and deliver timely finished intelligence to policy-makers. Basically, there has been a collective conclusion that the many intelligence failures of the war, especially those relating to surprise strategic attacks — such as BARBAROSSA and Pearl Harbor — came about not because there was no alarm system, but because often there were too many alarms going off at once. Without some sort of centralized system to coordinate intelligence, the argument runs, policymakers tend to be confused by what intelligence agencies like to

*Actually, the Navy had ignored evidence for years that even the mighty Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was no longer safe in anchorage from hostile air power. In one amazingly prescient forecast, General William (Billy) Mitchell in 1924 predicted that Pearl Harbor would be attacked successfully by Japanese planes, at 7:30 AM on a Sunday morning in the future. His superiors derided his conclusions. On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes were first spotted heading for Pearl Harbor at 7:30 AM.

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call the "noise" of sometimes-conflicting signals.

Events since the war tend to cast some doubt on whether the problem is that simple. Aside from the CIA's failures, such vaunted and highly centralized intelligence agencies as the British MI6 and the Israeli MOSSAD have made grievous errors, notably the Falklands Islands War of 1982 (when the British refused to believe the evidence of an imminent Argentine attack) and the Yom Kippur War of 1973 (when the Israelis completely misread the signs of impending Egyptian attack).

It is worthwhile to ask why post-World War II intelligence, however centralized, can fail just as calamitously as the Germans before BARBAROSSA or the Americans before Pearl Harbor: Because human beings are still the key ingredients in any intelligence enterprise. The lessons of World War II have created large intelligence bureaucracies, but despite centralization, they are in fact really composed of separate constituencies of collectors, analysts, reporters, estimators, directors and briefers. Each group, highly specialized, tends to form a distinctive intelligence "culture," intent on protecting bureaucratic turf and often contemptuous of competing groups of specialists.

That fragmentation, to a certain extent, often brings intelligence back to the pre-World War II era, when, for example, the assorted intelligence agencies of the United States each operated as though the others did not exist. Like Hottentots encountering an elephant for the first time, each man felt a particular part of the huge animal and drew his own conclusions. Since centralization has proven no panacea, modern intelligence has gone the next step – making intelligence basically a function of electronics and thus free of human bias and error. But that idea is just as fraught with error, for it ignores the fact that intelligence does not operate in a vacuum, but is rather the result of human judgment. Fundamentally, intelligence will always remain an inexact science, no matter how much modern technology might contribute to the task of intelligence collection. Consider, for example, what happened on a fall day in 1976 at the U.S. Navy War College in Rhode Island.

Highlight of the day was a special invitation-only briefing by Navy Intelligence officers on a development for which alarm bells had been ringing all over the Navy establishment for months: the Russians had deployed a new aircraft carrier called the *Kiev*. What could the intelligence people tell an expectant Navy audience about it? A great deal, as it turned out – in what amounted to a *bravura* display of the wizardry of modern intelligence collection, the intelligence officers proceeded to dissect the *Kiev* piece by piece. There were satellite and recon-

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naissance plane photographs showing every inch of the ship, electronic intercepts revealing the carrier's communication system, movies showing how its planes were launched, studies analyzing its propulsion system – in short, everything except how many times the ship's captain went to the bathroom.

However, at last, one of the officers sitting in the audience asked, "Yes, but what is it good for?" There was an embarrassed silence as the intelligence officers looked blankly at one another. The question had never occurred to them.

Arguably, in one sense, the *Kiev* briefing represented a considerable improvement over the dark days of early World War II, when U.S. Navy intelligence discovered, to its horror, that it did not have the slightest idea of the strength, characteristics and technical progress of the German Navy. A special lack was the dearth of intelligence on Germany's most feared warships, the deadly "pocket battleships," that threatened to interdict shipping lanes in the Atlantic. In December, 1939, one of those battleships, the *Graf Spee*, was cornered by the Royal Navy in the harbor of Montevideo, Uraguay (where it was subsequently scuttled). To read today the reports by U.S. Navy intelligence on the *Graf Spee* in 1939 – when the Americans were about to venture out boldly into a hostile Atlantic crawling with U-boats and commerce raiders – is to be struck by how truly amateurish American intelligence could be at that critical point. The "intelligence" produced by the Americans on the *Graf Spee* amounted to several tourist-camera pictures taken of the ship as it was sinking, crude drawings showing the ship's main characteristics (at least those visible above the waterline), and a piece of its armor plate, purchased by an enterprising U.S. Navy attache from a Montevideo junkyard.

And yet, nearly 40 years later, the highly-trained successors to this band of amateurs, for all their new technological tools, wound up at roughly the same blind alley – the *Kiev*, like the *Graf Spee*, was a mystery. What can this tell us about the intelligence process generally and American intelligence in particular? The same old lesson: intelligence is not empirical, and the importance of human judgment – with the corollary importance of seeing without bias – remains paramount.

It is a lesson that has had to be learned the hard way, over and over again.

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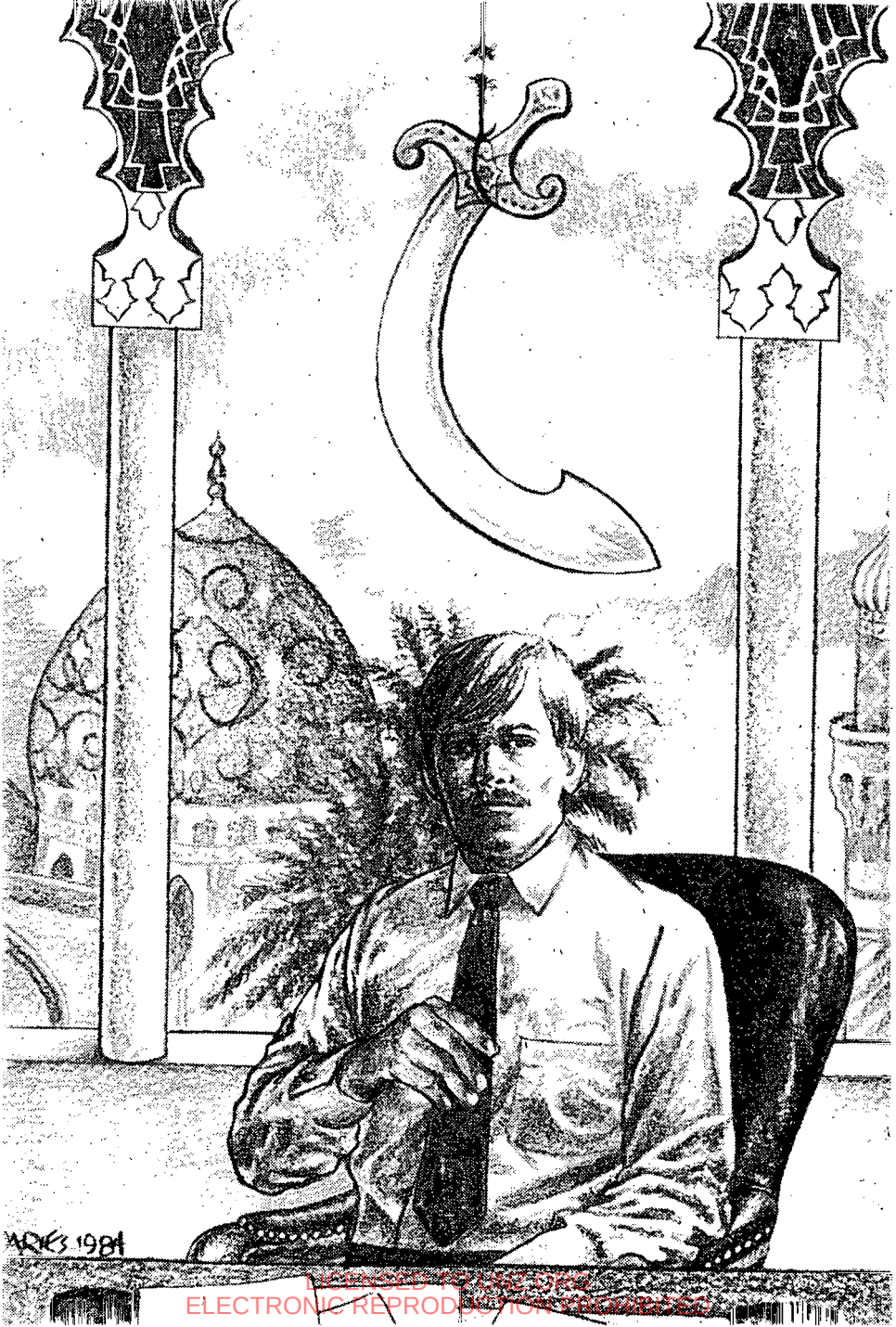

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MIDDLE MAN OUT

By Bob Wood

George Davis settled back in the rear seat of his LeSabre, unfolded his airmail copy of *Stars and Stripes*, and waited to be driven to his office. The car still had a new smell, but Rawi brought a little of the Middle East to his job as driver, so there was no chance that George could

Illustration by Aries

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imagine himself being driven across the Virginia countryside to headquarters at Langley. For a number of reasons, he would much rather be there, but the time had come when he could no longer avoid a field assignment and he had accepted it as graciously as possible, determined to make the most of it. After all, there was the compensation of being driven to work each morning instead of having to endure the horrors of Washington area traffic. George had come to enjoy the luxury of reading his morning paper in the car.

"Damn!"

George leaned forward and grasped his driver's shoulder. "Turn left at the next light, Rawi," he said. "Take the road to Sidda, cross the railway by the flyover, and come up on the back side of the embassy."

As the driver wheeled the big car around the corner and began to pick his way through a mass of bicycles, using the horn liberally, George spoke again.

"And, Rawi..."

"Sir?" The man let up on the horn to be able to hear.

"Keep this car moving, no matter what."

It was not until they had reached the bypass road and were going over thirty miles an hour that George was able to relax and think a little about what had happened.

He had first heard of James Hacklin through newspaper reports, but of course, after the case had begun to develop, the Agency generated a number of reports attempting to analyze it. Hacklin has been a good journeyman case officer in the Latin American division, had three overseas tours behind him, and was on the point of advancing to some increased responsibility, a basic level supervisory job, when something happened.

The obvious thing was his marriage breaking up, but that happened to many, perhaps most people in operations. The separations; the habit of husbands working a full day and then another half day during the evening, either meeting agents or cleaning up paperwork; often living in a world the wife could never be a part of; all created more strain than most marriages could bear. George, himself, had parted with his first wife early in his career, and his present wife, Dorothy, had been an Agency professional in her own right, so she knew beforehand what the circumstances of her marriage would be. This had been particularly fortunate for George, because it made her willing to accept without explanation a

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number of things he never could have provided adequate explanations for.

It was more than just the divorce that destroyed Hacklin, however. There was also the strain of living a life of constant duplicity. George could relate to that, God knows; all of them felt it to some extent. But the key factor that had taken Hacklin out was some faint echo of conscience that couldn't be suppressed. He had seen an innocent person hurt by some aspect of one of his operations, and it had started him questioning whether what he was doing was really worth the cost to himself and his family as well as to others who had no interest in it. This was a question that had never bothered George, but he was aware that most operations people encountered it at one time or another. In most cases, the intensity of their commitment to the work smothered the occasional twinges of conscience; they usually did not have time, literally, to think about such things. With Hacklin, something had prevented him from putting the guilt out of his mind and it combined with his divorce to tear him apart.

When he resigned, there had been no ill feelings on either side. Hacklin still believed in the necessity for the work he had been doing, but he couldn't bring himself to do it any longer. For their part, his superiors continued to regard him as an officer of some ability and potential, and though they were sorry to see him leave, they understood what he was facing. Hacklin thanked them when he left for having allowed him the privilege of serving with them.

There would never have been any Hacklin case except for what happened six months later. Hacklin had called in to the Office of Personnel for some help with a personal problem, something involving one of his children. Whatever it was would have taken someone perhaps half an hour to take care of for him, and he'd have remained a happy former employee, one more member of that solid group the Agency came to depend on so heavily for support through the investigations of the mid-70s.

Instead, the personnel man, having reviewed Hacklin's file, assumed from the manner of his resignation that he was merely an operations officer who had lacked either commitment or nerve. Seemingly, he felt constrained to do what he could to uphold the Agency's tough, hardnosed image, or perhaps made the mistake of thinking Hacklin was someone who could be kicked without

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kicking back. In any case, he told Hacklin, not very politely, that not only was he not obliged to comply with requests of the kind from former employees, he was prohibited by law from wasting his time on them. He would thank Hacklin, he said, not to bother him with any more such requests in the future. George reflected that the Soviet KGB, in 25 years of intense efforts, had never been able to do as much damage to the Agency as this GS-13 personnel officer had in a single afternoon.

As Agency psychologists reconstructed what must have happened, for their report, Hacklin was shattered by this rejection. He suddenly realized that the organization to which he had given his unqualified loyalty for a dozen years, to the detriment of himself and his family, and for which he still felt a certain loyalty, did not return that commitment, and did not at all consider itself obligated to him in any way. He wondered if it ever had. Had he just been kidding himself all those years, believing that he was part of a close-knit team doing important work; had he merely been manipulated into doing things his gut feelings told him repeatedly should not be done? The more he thought about it, and the more disillusioned he became, the more willing he felt to talk about it.

Gradually, reports of his talk got back to the Agency and he began to be regarded officially as a disgruntled ex-employee. He was kept under scrutiny for a while, and then they sent some people to talk to him. The interview began as an appeal to Hacklin to consider the effect his statements were having on the organization and his former colleagues. If he was unhappy about something, they said, let's talk about it and see what we can do to resolve it. Then they tried to Mutt-and-Jeff him, a second serious error on the Agency's part. While one man continued to appeal to him in a friendly way, the other appeared to lose patience and began to threaten him with legal action. It was as though they had no sense that Hacklin had himself been trained in the same techniques and had used them many times in dealing with his agents. The situation was both laughable and infuriating, and the interview only reinforced his feeling that he was viewed as nothing more than a pawn to be bent to the will of the organization. His self-respect, his survival, even, demanded that he resist them. He sent them away with the message that nothing they could do would keep him from speaking out against what he considered wrong.

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By this time, Hacklin had also attracted the attention of the KGB. Working through the Cubans, for whom he had developed some empathy, they approached him, encouraged him, and persuaded him to go to Mexico where they might meet with him relatively free of surveillance. While listening to him sympathetically in Mexico, the Cubans convinced him that what he must do was tell all he knew in a systematic way, and they offered to provide him with a certain amount of support while he worked on his now-famous book.

The book contained so much detail that Hacklin's former colleagues suspected that he must have been a Soviet penetration, a "mole," from the very first, because no one could have recalled so much of what he did in ten years of operations without the aid of notes made contemporaneously with the events. Some skeptics believed that Hacklin had been sent "out in the cold" by the Agency itself, and that detailed records of his old operations had been provided to him only after he had made contact with the Cubans and they had suggested writing a book. George was the only American, and one of the few people in the world, who knew exactly how Hacklin had obtained his data, and that neither of these two theories was correct.

Having exposed all the agents and fellow officers he knew in Latin America, Hacklin then teamed up with some anti-CIA radicals who were determined to make it impossible for the Agency to operate anywhere in the world. They set about identifying the CIA personnel at each embassy abroad, a relatively easy task in the days when the State Department still published the Foreign Service List. Some of the group's efforts came to the attention of a terrorist leader who chose to advance his revolutionary activities by assassinating the CIA station chief in his country. This caused George great personal sadness, for the man had been a good friend.

He had thought then that Hacklin had done all the damage he could.

As the car pulled to a stop in front of the embassy, George had already opened his door and was stepping out. He pushed through the front door, rushed past the marine guard, and abandoning all pretense to diplomatic dignity, took the stairs to the Agency vault two at a time. He arrived semi-winded, but before disappearing into his office told his secretary, Louise, "Get my wife on the phone. And tell

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Adam I want to see him right now."

Adam Ackerman, his deputy, was already in the office waiting for him.

"You've seen it, eh?" he asked.

"Yes. Has there been any cable traffic on it?"

"Not yet. It's still the middle of the night in Washington, and just a little past dawn in Paris. I happened to come in early today, or I wouldn't have known either. I drafted a cable for you while I was waiting. You may want to make some changes." He handed George two sheets of yellow lined paper.

Louise opened the door. "Mrs. Davis is on the phone," she said.

"Dorothy?" George scanned the first few lines of the draft cable while his wife acknowledged him.

"George? You've barely had time to get to the office. Is anything wrong?"

"Listen carefully. I want you to pack a bag, enough for a few days, and move into the Hilton. I'll have Rawi come and take you. Once you get there, stay in the hotel until you hear from me. If there's anything you wouldn't want to lose or leave behind, take it with you now."

"What in the world? What's happening?"

"Just do as I say. I can't explain now. After you've checked into the hotel, buy a copy of the *Stars and Stripes* and read page three, then you'll understand. I'll try to get over to talk to you later this morning, or maybe for lunch, and we'll discuss what has to be done; okay?"

"Sure. Of course."

"Good. Get going, and I'll call you at the hotel a little later."

After hanging up, he turned his full attention to the draft cable. It read:

TO: DIRECTOR

1. EUROPEAN STARS AND STRIPES REPORTS THIS MORNING THAT FERDINAND J. SCARLOTTI HAS IDENTIFIED EDWIN M. BELLIN AS CHIEF THIS INSTALLATION AND ACCUSED STATION OF MOUNTING NUMEROUS OPERATIONS AIMED AT OVERTHROW M1HEGIRA GOVERNMENT. STATION HAS NO INFO RE SOURCE OF SCARLOTTI'S ACCUSATIONS BUT WILL BEGIN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY ORIGINATED THIS AREA.

2. MEANWHILE, IMPLICATIONS OF SCARLOTTI ACTION POSE SERIOUS THREAT TO SAFETY OF BELLIN AND VIABILITY M1APOCALYPSE. REQUEST HQS. DEVISE MEANS, WITHIN PARAMETERS OF NECESSITY, TO NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY ALLEGATIONS, TO DEFUSE SITUATION CREATED.

As headquarters would know,

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Scarlotti and Bellin were Hacklin and Davis, respectively. M1Hegira was the code name used in the Agency to refer to Moammer Khadafy. George took his red pencil and marked out the last phrase of the first paragraph.

"We aren't going to start chasing around this town looking for a leak," he said. "It would only attract more attention, and I don't need that. It might be worth looking for a leak here if Hacklin's information were accurate, but it's only half fact. Whoever dreamed it up is probably not in this town." Then he added a third paragraph to the draft:

3. REQUEST HQS. APPROVAL EVACUATION BELLIN'S WIFE IF NECESSARY.

He punched the button on his intercom. "Louise?"

When she came to the door, he handed her the draft. "Type this up right away. Is Womack in yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Find him and get him up here."

As she left, he turned back to Adam. "Have you got a handle on all the station operations? In case I am called home?"

"Sure. But you're the only contact with M1Devious. You'll have to make arrangements to turn him over to me if possible. Otherwise I can use the emergency contact plan."

"I've already considered that, and I think it's better if Prentiss takes him. You'll have your hands full running the station, especially with PGStroller to take care of. That really has to continue to be your first priority. You have a scheduled meeting with him tonight, don't you?"

"Yes."

Womack poked his head in. "What can I do for you, George?"

"Come in. Sit down. Did you see in the *Stars and Stripes* what Hacklin has done to me?"

"Yes. Rotten luck. The lousy thing is, it could happen to any of us as long as that bastard is running around loose. I was misidentified in certain circles as being the chief of station in Karachi two years ago, but luckily there was no one in Karachi out to get the chief of station's scalp. You've got an entirely different situation here."

"Yes, and I have no way of knowing what response it calls for until I get some reading on what effect it's having. I want you to have M1Derby and M1Derby-2 put their ears to the ground and see what kind of rumblings they can pick up from their local Libyan friends. If the Libyans pick up on this and feel obliged to take me out, I'm going to have to leave the country. There's no way I could

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stay alive under the circumstances, let alone continue to do my job. Can you see them sometime today? They may even have something to tell you already."

"You bet. I'll see them around noon and have a report for you by 2 or 3, if they've got any news. Anything else?"

"Yes. Don't, under any circumstances, imply that any part of what Hacklin has said is correct. As far as Derby is concerned, you're only assessing the danger to an ordinary embassy officer as the result of a completely mistaken report."

"Of course. I'll get back to you this afternoon."

When Womack left, George turned his attention back to Adam. "What time do you see Stroller?"

"Eight-forty."

"I want to go with you. There's a good chance I'll be called home because of this, and the desk, the counterintelligence staff, everyone is going to want some kind of personal report on him. Under ordinary circumstances, I'd have taken him over from you when your tour ends and you'd have given them the report. If I'm going to have to do it, I want to see him, smell him, talk to him, so I'll have something to tell them. Now that my cover's been blown by Hacklin, there are no security considerations to keep me from meeting him. Do you see any other problems?"

Adam mentally reviewed his operation for a moment: PGStroller, his burgeoning star of an agent. Adam was obliged to protect the integrity of the operation, even if it meant objecting to something the chief of station wanted to do. Stroller, true name Stefan Oblantov, was a third secretary at the Soviet embassy. Only a few weeks before George's arrival at the station, he had slipped a note to Dave Weston, George's predecessor, while chatting at a diplomatic reception. "I want to talk to you secretly," the note had said. It gave instructions on how he could be contacted securely, if the Agency were willing to do so.

In the days when James Angleton had run the counterintelligence staff, the Agency would not have been willing. Stroller, who had not up to then been identified as a KGB officer, would have been discounted as a blatant provocation, and would never have been taken seriously; might even have been ignored. Angleton had been replaced, however, by men who were less inclined to believe that the Russian leaders were able to control everything their people did; more ready to take a risk and see what came of it. Weston, in order not to compromise his

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embassy position, which was soon to become George's cover, passed the case to his deputy, Adam, after obtaining a provisional approval for contact with Stroller.

Adam had made contact. Very cautiously he had established a personal relationship with him, spent hours, as many as Stroller could reasonably devote to their clandestine meetings, talking about the man's background and motivation, reviewing his access and discussing what he expected to get from the relationship, listening always for the false note, the slip that would indicate that his operation was less, or more, than it appeared. He scrutinized every detail that Stroller told him, and what he couldn't confirm on his own he relayed to headquarters in long cables, asking for checks against the enormous files and data banks at Langley.

Having entered this exercise a hopeful skeptic, Adam had seen the operation become more and more promising until he now was almost ready to request formal clearance for Stroller's use as an agent. When that time came, it would help to have someone available to give the staff a first-hand gut judgment of the man. It was all to his advantage to have George meet Stroller.

"No, I don't see any other problems," he said.

"Fine. Let's make arrangements this afternoon on how to meet and go to the safehouse."

After Adam left, George spent most of the morning on ordinary station business. He read the incoming cables, and while under other circumstances he might have called in the case officers responsible to explain two of them, commonplace problems held no interest for him today. He left the office at 11:30 to meet Dorothy for lunch at the Hilton Grill. She accepted the necessity of abandoning the house without question, but rebelled at the idea of returning to the States without him.

"That's insane," she said. "It's you they'll be after. It doesn't make sense for me to leave if you're going to stay here."

"I may be ordered home, too. I just asked for permission to ship you home at my discretion instead of headquarters'."

"Then we'll go together. I can certainly be as safe holed up here in the hotel as you can doing the things you have to do."

"We'll let it go at that for now. Let's just see how things look when and if I get permission, okay?"

Dorothy was satisfied to postpone the argument until later, feeling she had won a partial victory, at least.

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At two that afternoon, Womack came in with his first report. MlDerby and his brother-in-law, MlDerby-2, had fanned out among the coffeehouses to assess the reaction of the city's Libyan emigres to the *Stars and Stripes* article. They had all heard of it, but most reacted philosophically. "What could one expect of the Americans?" they said. "Of course they will try to eliminate Moammer." Only one of Derby-2's acquaintances, a man suspected of being a secret police agent, exhibited a more violent response. "The American pigs," he warned, "will learn that such actions, such thoughts, even, are far more expensive than they dreamed."

George took this to mean that an attempt, an officially-sponsored attempt on his life, would be made sometime in the near future. Asking Womack to bring him further reports as they developed, he next called the communications chief to his office.

"I want you to set up a clear line for me to Gregory. Call me to the vault as soon as it's ready."

"Right now? We've got a bushel of traffic coming in."

"You'll just have to shut it off for a while. I've got to talk to Gregory. Let me know as soon as he's on the other end."

George got the call from Commo forty minutes later. "Your party's on the line," he was told.

When he got to the vault, the printers, normally clattering at this time of day with a rush of messages not only for the CIA station but for the embassy offices as well, were all silent. The Commo chief and his two on-duty operators were standing at the back of the vault taking an unscheduled break, hands full of coffee cups and cigarettes. A typist's chair was drawn up before a teletype keyboard just inside the vault door. "Is this it?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Sitting at the keyboard, he tapped out:

BELLIN HERE FOR GREGORY

After a brief delay, the keyboard came to life on its own, printing:

GREGORY HERE. GO AHEAD.

George hesitated for a moment. He knew that Harry Schneider, chief of the Near East/Africa division, was waiting at the other end to see what he had called about, and perhaps had some things to tell him as well, but talking to someone over a teletype link was not like a phone conversation, nor was it like typing a letter — it was more immediate than one, more detached than the other. He always found it hard to start. He had selected

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this form of communication not only because it was faster and just as secure as other Agency communications, but also because it left no tracks. There were no message numbers required for such informal discussions, and if both parties destroyed the typescript that came out of their machines, there would be no record of the exchange. Without looking at them, George spoke to the operators, "Why don't you fellows wait outside until I'm finished." Then, as they filed out behind him, he started to type.

HOPE I HAVEN'T INTERRUPTED ANYTHING IMPORTANT.

YOU ARE WHAT'S IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW. YOU HAVE THE SYMPATHY OF ALL YOUR FRIENDS HERE. BAD LUCK. YOU ARE TAKING PRECAUTIONS?

MOVING INTO HOTEL UNTIL DUST SETTLES.

ANY INDICATIONS OF TROUBLE?

DERBY-2 HEARD RUMBLES FROM SOME OF HIS FRIENDS, BUT NOTHING DEFINITE. WE CONTINUE WITH SEVERAL EARS TO THE GROUND. WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

BEST JUDGMENT IS THAT HACKLIN HAD NO SOLID INFO, BASED STATEMENT ON SPECULATION.

HE PEGGED ME AS COS. HOW MUCH MORE SOLID COULD INFO BE?

LUCKY GUESS. YOU SUDDENLY APPEAR AS EMBASSY FIRST SECY WITH NO FOREIGN SERVICE BACKGROUND. CAREFUL SCRUTINY GIVES GOOD BASIS FOR CALCULATED SPECULATION. ANY RATE, WE FIND NO LINE LEADING HACKLIN TO YOU OR M1APOCALYPSE OP.

WHAT IS INITIAL DAMAGE ASSESSMENT ON ME AND ON M1APOCALYPSE?

APOCALYPSE STILL VIABLE AS HACKLIN OBVIOUSLY HAS ONLY FOGGIEST IMPRESSION SOMETHING OF THE SORT GOING ON. YOU ARE ANOTHER STORY. DEPENDS ON HOW SITUATION DEVELOPS THERE. IF NO ATTEMPT ON YOU MADE WITHIN TWO WEEKS, LIKELIHOOD DECREASES RAPIDLY THEREAFTER. HOWEVER, IF THEY APPEAR TO BE BUILDING UP SOMETHING BIG, YOU MAY NOT WANT TO HANG AROUND TOO LONG. YOU CANNOT, REPEAT, CANNOT, BE PROTECTED FROM A DETERMINED ATTACK.

AM ACUTELY CONSCIOUS MY VULNERABILITY. WILL DISCUSS WITH YOU AGAIN IN A FEW DAYS. MEANWHILE, WHAT ELSE IS HACKLIN LIKELY TO DO?

MEANING WHAT?

MEANING THAT PERHAPS HE HAS ALREADY DONE ALL THE DAMAGE WE SHOULD ACCEPT. PERHAPS THE TIME HAS COME

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TO CONSIDER PHYSICALLY ELIMINATING HIM.

For a long time the machine was silent. George was on the point of adding something to soften the impact of his suggestion when the printer came to life again.

WHEW! GLAD YOU DIDN'T CHOOSE TO PUT THAT IN A CABLE. SUGGEST WE BOTH RUN ALL TYPESHEETS THROUGH SHREDDER IMMEDIATELY TRANSMISSION IS COMPLETED.

THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. WHAT IS YOUR REACTION?

YOU ARE AWARE SUCH ACTION HAS BEEN DISCUSSED INFORMALLY AND UNOFFICIALLY FOR YEARS. SUFFICE IT TO SAY THERE IS A GREAT DEAL MORE TALK OF THIS KIND GOING ON THIS MORNING, PARTICULARLY IN OUR DIVISION. YOUR FEELINGS HAVE BEEN TAKEN NOTE OF. BEYOND THIS I CANNOT COMMENT.

KEEP IN MIND THIS IS NOT CASTRO WE ARE TALKING ABOUT. THIS IS A SINGLE MAN LIVING IN A GRUNGY APARTMENT IN VIENNA. THERE IS NO NEED FOR AN ELABORATE OPERATION. THE WHOLE THING COULD BE HANDLED THROUGH INFORMAL ARRANGEMENTS, LIKE THIS CONVERSATION. WE BOTH KNOW THIS HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE.

I SAID WE HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF YOUR FEELINGS. LET'S DROP THIS WHOLE THING RIGHT NOW. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?

NOTHING.

LET'S GET OFF THE LINE, THEN, AND OPEN UP THE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL AGAIN. BE CAREFUL.

RIGHT.

George switched off his printer, tore off the text it had printed, folded it carefully, and ran it through the shredder. That done, he opened the door and called to the operators, "Okay, gentlemen, you can get it hooked up again now."

At 8:15 that evening, Rawi pulled the Buick into the waiting area near the front door of the Hilton and parked in plain view, as George had instructed him. At 8:22 George slipped out a side entrance just as Adam came around the corner in his car, stopping only long enough for George to get in.

They drove to an area of the city neither wholly native quarter nor foreign residential. It was the part of town where a European businessman might keep his mistress. Once in the apartment, they waited for Stroller to arrive.

"Does he usually get to meetings on time?" George asked.

"Punctual, but he doesn't split seconds. I'd worry about him if he did."

"He never has any problem

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with surveillance? Never worries about it?"

"Just once. He thought someone might be following him and took the time to check on it. He was wrong, but he arrived about fifteen minutes late."

George began to feel the old nervousness develop, the tension he always felt before meeting a new controller. He had always prided himself on maintaining a certain control of his relationships himself, but it was something that had to be reestablished each time he was turned over to someone new, and the first few moments were critical. He had not intended to make contact with Stroller for several weeks, just before Adam's departure. Now that circumstances had forced the event, he was anxious for it to be over with.

"Here he comes now."

Adam had been standing next to the window, peering out between the blind and the window frame. Now he straightened the blind and curtain and crossed the door, waiting for Stroller's knock.

The door opened on the antithesis of the "proletarian modern" Russian. Not terribly tall, an inch or so short of six feet, Stroller was slender enough to make him look taller, and he moved with a grace that would have accredited him to the diplomatic service of any European country. His nose was straight, his face thin, his expression pleasant, and his dark hair just beginning to grey at the temples. He would not have looked out of place as commander of the Czar's palace guard. There's a lot more white than red in his background, George thought to himself.

Adam welcomed him, introduced George, and kept up a running string of questions and comments that seemed only innocent small talk but which Adam had carefully contrived to elicit his agent's unguarded reactions — a word association test, but more sophisticated. Then, maintaining an easy social tone, he began to debrief the man, question him about what had gone on in his embassy since their last meeting. Stroller had always resisted preparation of written reports or carrying anything incriminating with him to their meetings, but on this occasion he had brought smudged copies, prepared on the Russian version of a Xerox, of two embassy documents; one a security review and the other a summary of KGB contracts with local elements of the PLO. When Adam and George had made as much of these two documents as their rudimentary Russian would

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allow, Stroller took a *Reader's Digest*-sized envelope from his pocket and laid it on the table between them.

"I must take this back with me tonight," he said.

Adam took a booklet from the envelope, thumbed through it quickly, and looked at Stroller in some surprise.

"This is a communications handbook," he said.

"Yes, that's why I must return it tonight. If it's missed, there will be an investigation that will not be closed until they find out what happened to it."

"But I can't even read this, and I can't take enough useful notes on what you can tell me about it in the time we have. You've got to let me have it a little longer."

"I can't."

George interrupted. "Adam, don't you have a copy camera here in the apartment?" He knew Adam hadn't, and Adam, on the brink of despair, confirmed this.

"Well, we can still salvage this situation if you simply return to the office and get one. I'll chat with Stefan until you return, as I wanted to do anyway, and then we can make a photocopy of this document. It's going to cut short your meeting, but that's a minor and unavoidable sacrifice."

For a moment, Adam, unwilling to abandon his agent to someone else, seemed on the point of suggesting that George go pick up a camera, but once he dismissed that idea, he moved quickly. "There's a bottle of Cognac in the kitchen," he said. "I'll be back in fifteen minutes." The door closed quietly behind him and he made no sound going down the stairs.

Adam's departure was followed by a brief silence in which neither of the men left behind wanted to be the first to speak. Then, smiling wryly, Stroller asked, "Aren't you going to offer me that drink, George?"

"Yes, of course." He brought two glasses and a bottle of Courvoisier from the kitchen. While George poured, Stroller lit a cigarette and remarked, "I must say that this is the most bizarre clandestine meeting I've attended in all my years in intelligence work. Two secret agents, two case officers, and one of the agents is the superior officer of the other agent's case officer. The other agent is the case officer of the first case officer's superior. Didn't you Americans once have a popular song, 'I'm My Own Grandfather?' This situation reminds me of that."

"I'm afraid I'm too preoccupied with other concerns to appreciate the irony of our situation."

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"Ah, of course, Hacklin. I anticipated that you might come to the meeting tonight. Otherwise I could never have gotten permission to release the communications manual. Naturally, it will be superceded before your people can put it to any effective use, but this will cause us considerable trouble nonetheless."

George studied his companion for a moment and asked, "Do your people consider me a less valuable source here than I was in Washington?"

"More limited, perhaps, but hardly less valuable. You will be going back to Washington one day."

"Perhaps sooner than we expected."

"So much the better. In any case, do you imagine I would have become a walk-in defector if we hadn't considered it essential to maintain contact with you? To say nothing of the communications data we are sacrificing to make this emergency meeting possible. Exactly what is bothering you, George?"

"It simply occurred to me that if I have outlived my usefulness and become a potential embarrassment, Mr. Hacklin's exposure would be a neat way of disposing of me."

"That's nonsense. We have no control over what Hacklin does. You should know that, if anyone does."

"Yes, it's ironic, isn't it, that he never would have achieved so much credibility if I hadn't provided you with the data on all his operations? Now he's using that credibility to destroy me. And of course, you don't need to control him to use him like that. All it would take is a suggestion from one of his contacts. Your people could have done that."

"Your own Agency also has ample access for something of the sort."

"That's occurred to me, too, and I wonder, does someone suspect me? I can't tell, but even if someone did, this wouldn't be the Agency style. They wouldn't attempt to dispose of me in such a discreet and indirect way; they'd tuck me away in a room and sweat me until they'd learned everything they want to know. No, there's no motivation for anyone on the Agency side to do something like this."

Stroller snorted. "That's oversimplifying," he said, "and you know it. There are plenty of people in your government, and in your Agency, especially, who would be mortified if your service on our behalf were to become public knowledge. Moreover, the political climate in your country is such that they wouldn't be able to sweat anyone for more than half an

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hour without becoming smothered in lawyers. No, I don't like to tell you this, George, but if you are ever found out, don't count on your case ever getting any judicial disposition. But that's neither here nor there. Why are you so intent on seeing someone behind Hacklin's disclosure? He's perfectly capable of having done it on his own. It could all have been calculated speculation on his part."

"What a coincidence! Those are the very words that the people at Langley used to persuade me that it all amounted to nothing. That doesn't change the fact that Khadafy's hoods will be out to get me. Would you like to ride with me to the reception at the Ministry next week? I thought not."

George's face was flushed now, his voice gone shrill. If Adam returned unexpectedly, he would know something other than casual conversation had transpired. While George composed himself, Stroller tried to soothe him.

"Neither of us should be surprised at your reaction to this, George," he said. "We both know it's perfectly natural for an intelligence operative to undergo this kind of crisis at some time or other. You've been insulated from it all these years because of your unique position. Not only have you been privy to almost everything your own Agency was doing, you knew something that the Agency didn't know — that you were reporting their secrets to us. What's more, you have probably kept some secrets from us over the years. It's understandable. You realized an intelligence officer's fondest dream — to have control of more information than anyone else, and to allow others to know only what suited you.

"Now at last you've come up against something that affects you vitally, and that you can't fathom, and it's thrown you into this *crise*. George, believe me, it's nothing. It's pure paranoia. Neither our side nor the Agency is out to get you."

"You're pretty sure of that, are you? That it's all Hacklin's own doing?"

"Yes, of course. Reasonably sure."

"Well, I want him punished. Eliminated. So he can't cause this kind of problem for me or anyone else again."

"You mean . . . ?"

"I mean dead."

"You must realize that our Bureau may still consider Hacklin to have some usefulness."

"More than I?"

"Are those the terms you're putting it in, after all these years?"

"I am. Consider it a test of

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the good faith you're so convinced of."

"I can't promise anything."

"I understand that. Just be sure that the Center understands my position."

"That I can promise."

When Adam returned, George took the camera equipment and retired to the kitchen for half an hour to copy the book, giving Adam an opportunity to talk privately to the man he considered to be his agent. When the copy was done and Stroller was preparing to leave, George took his hand and told him, "It was a pleasure to meet you, Stefan. I hope we can talk again sometime."

"I sincerely hope so, sir," the Russian said.

For the next two weeks, as nothing happened, George gradually relaxed and finally moved back into his house. Each day, the chance that the Libyans might respond to Hacklin's revelation was further diminished. Even so, George did not allow his movements to fall into a daily pattern of either time or route, and he continued to carry a pistol, a .38 police special, although he knew it would be of minimal effect against most kinds of terrorist attack.

It was on a Thursday morning, exactly 22 days after the first item on Hacklin, that George found his name in the *Stars and Stripes* again, this time on page seven. This was a shorter item covering the scanty details, all that was known, surrounding the circumstances of Hacklin's death the evening before. Vienna police had announced that he had been killed by a hit-run driver as he walked home from a friend's apartment.

George felt a rush of satisfaction as he read of the incident. He had successfully exploited his position with one or the other of the world's two most powerful intelligence organizations to destroy the man who had tried to destroy him. It gave him a sense of power that he had felt many times before in his life, and he savored it now. All that remained, he thought, was to learn which of them had done it, the Agency or the KGB. It would do no good to ask whether the Agency had done it, he knew. Even if they had, Schneider would never admit it, even to him. Stefan, on the other hand, might take credit for the KGB whether they had anything to do with the assassination or not. The only hint he could hope for would be in the Headquarters comment on Hacklin's death. If they had had nothing to do with it, there would be free speculation on all possibilities, a review of all the enemies Hacklin had made and an assessment of their motiva-

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tions for doing away with him. Although they would have no reason to believe that the KGB had cause to want Hacklin out of the way, they would even consider that action, and actions by other intelligence agencies Hacklin had contact with. Their cable would exhaust all possibilities.

On the other hand, if it had been an Agency action that disposed of Hacklin, the cable would be cold and detached. It would accept and reinforce the official judgment that his death had been accidental, with no suggestion of any other possibility, and they would speculate instead on how Hacklin's loss affected the fortunes of the various services who had used him. The evidence would not be conclusive, but it would be satisfactory. And of course, once he knew which service had disposed of Hacklin, he'd know which had tried to dispose of him. George looked forward to reading the morning cable traffic.

They were just pulling away from a traffic light, and he was on the point of telling Rawi to abandon the roundabout route they had set up for today and drive directly to the embassy, when he heard a thump on the side of the car.

The instructions to Rawi froze in his throat. He knew what the sound was — someone had attached a limpet charge to the car door. He looked out the window on the side from which the sound had come and, sure enough, there was a ragged man on a bicycle pedalling rapidly away.

George never even considered his alternatives. Enraged, he drew his pistol and fired three shots at the retreating figure without taking time to roll down the window. Through the shattered glass he thought he saw the man drop, and felt a momentary surge of exultation.

The explosion caught him with his hand on the door latch and blew him out of the car and against the wall of a building opposite, so his body, though badly broken, showed few effects of the explosion itself. In his last moment of consciousness, he realized that he might have saved himself if he had moved to do so when he first heard the bomb being attached, but that was not the cause of the regret that overwhelmed him at the last instant. His whole mind was focussed on the question he had moments before thought was about to be answered, and his final thought, punctuated by the blast of a crude plastic bomb, was that he would never know whose side he had really been on.

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VIOLETS IN THE RAIN

by Esther Jane Neely

Illustration by Rob Richards

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Every day, after her violin lesson, Carla Nevin strolled along Barcelona's *Ramblas* to the port, where she saw great ships from across the world.

Usually, on the *Ramblas*, Carla was approached by lottery ticket sellers and shoeshine boys, or blocked by flirting sailors. She was always shoved along with crowds of tourists and jostled when she tried to get near the bird cages.

But today, in the rain, the nightingales were not singing; the bird people had covered their cages. Few people strolled. The walk stretched ahead, uncluttered except for the colorful stalls and the few hurrying passersby.

The *Ramblas*, with its protective twin barriers of plane trees, and in spite of its fast moving traffic on either side of the perfectly laid design of tile on the promenade, traced a fascinating route to the port. It led also to the many narrow, twisting streets of the "old town," which Carla would roam until time for Professor Murillo's last pupil to leave; then, Carla and the professor would start home.

Today she must go to the port. Spain's newest battleship would anchor out in the harbor. Like everyone else, she wanted to see it. Tonight, dignitaries and officers from the *Commandancia General* — and it was reported, government officials from Madrid, including (it was rumored) the prime minister himself — would arrive for a brief dock ceremony and a review of the ship before the celebration ceremonies the next day. Carla hoped to get a glimpse of the ship after she bought her violets.

"In that flashing moment, all warnings about getting involved in anything even remotely criminal swirled across her vision."

She always bought them at the last flower stall, because the woman there spoke some English. Although Carla, with three other students, boarded in the home of Professor Murillo, few could understand her Spanish.

As she reached the last flower stall, a gust of wind off the waterfront blew open her reversible raincoat. Closing it, she spoke to the flower woman, but the woman was intent upon a young man approaching. He could be British or American, in his tan London Fog, his fair hair

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uncovered and tossed in the wind, his stride long and swift.

Carla dodged out of his way while juggling her open umbrella, her violin case and her music roll, and trying to get her change purse back into her raincoat pocket as she reached out for her violets.

Above the steady squish of tires, there came a violent rush of footsteps down the tile pavement. A dark young man in a leather jacket crashed into the blond young man, who uttered a cry as he fell against Carla, then collapsed at her feet. It all happened so fast, it was like a twirling kaleidoscope: the blond man with an arm outstretched to the woman, the wild and turbulent crush of the furious, dark young man, and all in one second...

In that second, Carla saw a lean dark face, flashing very black, very angry eyes, then the man was swiftly gone, darting across the street between the cars, heading toward the waterfront.

Carla dropped to her knees besides the fallen man. "Lie still. You're hurt. Someone will get help."

She glanced up at the flower woman, who nodded, her face impassive.

The young man grasped her wrist. "You're American. Thank God. Do you know *Los Caracoles*?"

"The restaurant? Yes, up near the *Plaza Real*, not far from the gothic cathedral."

He slipped something small into her hand, the one that still clutched the violets and her umbrella.

"Don't lose that. Go to Caracoles, to the last table against the outside wall, straight ahead as you pass the kitchen. Hold up the violets as if you are smelling them... "

He was weakening. His color was deathly pale. Blood had seeped through his coat to her sleeve.

"You've been stabbed," she gasped.

His grip on her wrist was lessening. "He must say to you, 'Violets are red,' otherwise don't give it to him. Hurry, go now. Go quickly. Caracoles... "

All color had drained from his face.

"But what will I do with this if he isn't there, or if he doesn't say...? What if someone else got that table first?"

But he didn't hear her.

She placed her fingers against his throat and felt a faint pulse.

Glancing around as she heard a police whistle, she told him, "Help is coming," and hoped that he heard her. Then, slowly, she picked up her umbrella. She was still trying to figure out the whirling kaleidoscope. It had all been so

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fast...

The flower woman hovered partway between her stall and Carla and the hurt young man. Many people had gathered to look. Cars on both sides of the promenade moved slowly, as people stared. A siren sounded in the distance; the hospital was only a few blocks away.

She hated leaving him lying there in the rain, his violets still clutched in his hand. However, there was no more she could do.

As the policeman moved in, Carla walked around a tall, thin man in narrow, oval glasses, faded into a group, and then, at a walkway, crossed the street.

She walked briskly, wanting to run. She still gripped the violets and the small article the blond man had given her, and her umbrella. Her other hand clutched the handles of her music roll and her violin case. She had decided her route to Caracoles.

She kept looking around, a lump in her throat, her heart beating wildly. Staying close to the old buildings, she raced down the narrow street, around a corner, and down another street into an old narrow cobbled passageway.

She had gone only a short distance when she recognized the pounding footsteps behind her. Tearing around a corner, she fell into a doorway. She stood at the foot of a steep stairway, afraid to start upward, afraid she would be caught halfway. With her heart pounding, she heard the footsteps pass. She stayed motionless.

Placing her things on a step, she slipped the small packet into her brassiere, turned her coat to the printed side, and pulled the hood over her hair and down so that it partially concealed her face. Opening her cases, she jammed the music around the violin, and stood the music case in the corner. The violets she put in her pocket. Her coat was big and billowy. Awkwardly, she got her violin case under her arm.

She listened intently, aware of her fast-beating heart. Easing the door open slightly, she peered out. Men and women were walking, but none wore leather jackets.

She went out the door, slowly, bent forward in the manner of an old woman, and held the umbrella over her head. Three men walked ahead of her. She moved close behind them and stayed in their footsteps until she had to turn off. Then, in terror, looking in all directions, she ran across the street, holding the umbrella higher, looking for doorways she could rush into. She was almost there.

When she reached *Los Caracoles*, she hurried to the

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door and pushed it open. She passed the heat of the long kitchen and saw that many people were gathered around the last table. A siren sounded in the distance.

"He's been stabbed," a high-pitched woman's voice proclaimed. "Right here while we were drinking our coffee."

Carla sat weakly upon a chair. She had to know if this was her contact and if the man was dead. If so, what was she to do with the packet?

She had to go with him, wherever they took him, dead or alive. She had to find out who he was, because then she might know what to do. Getting up, her limbs trembling, she walked toward the last table, and looked down. This man was also young and fair, with a pleasant face that appeared to grimace.

Outside, the siren stopped with a wail, so unlike sirens at home, so insistent somehow...

They would be taking him.

Shoving her way past a waiter, she flung herself toward the man in the chair. "Bob," she exclaimed, screaming the first name that came into her mind.

She knelt beside him, took his hand, and pulled his head close to hers in an embrace.

"Violets," she said.

"Violets are red," he spoke into her hair. The voice was weak, but he was alive. "Why did they send a girl? You can't..."

The ambulance men had arrived. Carla hung on to the injured man, and when the two uniformed nurses tried to lift him, she clung to his arm and screamed, half in what Spanish she could remember, half in English, begging to go along, not to be left alone in this strange city with murderers running loose. She was amazed, in spite of her terror, at her histrionics.

Finally, one of the ambulance attendants nodded his head toward the door. Still holding the young man's hand, she walked docilely at his side, clutching her violin case and her umbrella, feeling that any minute her legs would collapse beneath her.

At the emergency desk, Carla was told that her husband's wound was painful, but that the knife had missed vital organs. It would be attended, and bandaged, and she could take him home where he should get complete rest for at least three days. She thanked the girl and went into the hall to wait.

She was sitting on a bench in the long corridor when she glanced up to see the flower woman from the last stall, a policeman, and a man who seemed somehow familiar. The group had come out of the

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emergency room and were soon to pass where she sat. There was no time for her to run, in the instant that her imagination saw the flower woman pointing at her and telling the policeman that she, Carla, had stabbed the blond young man on the *Ramblas* in front of her stand.

In that flashing moment, all of Professor Murillo's warnings about getting involved in anything even romotely criminal swirled across her vision, so that she flung the side of her raincoat out until it covered the violin at her side.

The man who looked somewhat familiar was tall and thin, and looking straight at her through small oval glasses. It was then that she remembered moving around him when she got up to run to *Los Caracoles*. Both he and the flower woman could and would identify her as the girl who was closest to the fallen man; the one who ran away.

She would be taken to jail. She would be searched. The packet still hidden in her brassiere would be found. She would probably be accused of stabbing...

The tall thin man stopped, spoke to the policeman, then stepped quickly to stand directly in front of Carla, where he spun out a stream of rapid Spanish.

The policeman looked at Carla. He was the same one who had blown his whistle and made his way past that thin man to come to the rescue. The thin man turned to the flower woman.

Carla's heart stopped.

The woman's face was impassive. Very decisively she shook her head.

"Perdon, senora." The policeman touched his cap with his fingertips, and without a backward look, he and the flower woman proceeded down the corridor.

The tall thin man followed them slowly, his head turned back studying Carla.

To show her total disinterest, Carla looked up at the clock upon the wall. Professor Murillo's last pupil would be leaving his studio soon. He would expect Carla to be waiting.

Jumping up, she ran to the telephone she had seen near the emergency door.

Vincente, Professor Murillo's last pupil, answered the telephone. "Vincente, please tell him that I will not meet him. Tell him that I will be late, and that I may bring a friend. He is running very late? Then I may catch him? Thank you."

Relieved that the professor, who watched over his foreign students zealously, had not answered the telephone, Carla

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hung up.

As she did so, the young American walked unsteadily out of the emergency room. For the first time, Carla wondered if, after all, he was American. From a distance, he had an alien look. It was something about his walk...

He came to her and placed his arm around her, as if in an embrace, nestling his head close to her neck.

"You've probably blown your cover, or I have. I had to show my passport. The police were there. They questioned me at Caracoles. I told them you were just a girl I picked up, that you were crazy about me. Pretty hard to believe considering that I just got in. That's one of the reasons I refused to work with a woman. What do they do to me? Send me a woman, and on a big job like this. I ought to have an army, there'll be so much security. Well, come on, let's get out of here."

His grip on her arm hurt. She knew it was bruising her. And he was slurring his words. No, it wasn't slurring. In his anger, he had lost his precise, or his perfect, English that had instantly convinced her that he was an American. He might be in shock, or he may have been given medication that caused his speech change.

"You are to rest for three days," she told him, uncertainly as he jerked her to the curb.

The taxicab, at which he had been furiously waving, turned in the street and started back toward them. Above the shriek of the tires, she heard pounding footsteps behind them, and pulled at the man beside her.

"Run! Get in! Quickly!"

He flopped into the seat beside her, and they both saw the boy in the leather jacket and his flying legs.

He turned her toward him. "Maybe you aren't bad luck after all."

The taxi turned into a side street and the car lights swept over a car starting from the curb. In that moment of passing the car, she saw the tall man with the narrow glasses at the wheel. The flower woman flung the rear door open and the boy in the leather jacket leaped in. As the taxi sped on, Carla pondered the gentle and motherly expression on the flower woman's face.

The man at her side told the driver to take them to the *Hotel Colon*. Her terror subsided. Situated across the street from the old gothic cathedral, the hotel was not far from Professor Murillo's studio. She wanted only to give this man the small object and hurry there.

During the short trip to the *Hotel Colon*, the man watched out the rear window of the taxi. As they arrived, he rushed her

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into the silent lobby, leading her to a deserted corner where a small divan allowed a full view of the whole lobby.

He emitted a deep sigh. "My car is parked near here. Now give me the package so we can get on with our work. It is almost time."

She reached for the packet, realized that it had slipped. "I've secured it on my person." She stood. "I'll be right back."

When she started to walk, her knees almost collapsed. It was with tremendous relief that she dropped to the velvet couch in the ladies' lounge and reached for the packet. As she pulled it out, it slipped from her shaking fingers and fell to the floor. A car key slid out. The note that had been wrapped around it had become unfolded. She started to wrap it around the key and saw that it was a hand-drawn map. In large print, she read the words *"CUIDADO,"* CAUTION.

"Caution," the note read in large uneven print, "car is loaded; timer set. Drive to X. Do *not* turn off engine. Lock doors, Run."

A hand-drawn map of the port was marked with an X at the dock, where the new battleship celebration was to be held tonight, where the dignitaries would soon be gathering, where possibly the prime minister, who had many political enemies, would appear. Thinking, though not too clearly, she refolded the map around the key.

There had to be a way out of the hotel without passing the man, but she didn't know where that exit might be. She would try to get to the desk to tell someone to alert the authorities. If necessary, she would let them read the note. Slowly, she started to the door, her feet heavy, her legs turned to lead.

He was waiting outside the lounge door, impatiently, her violin case and umbrella hanging from one hand. With the other, he took the wrapped key and snatched her wrist. Then he snapped the two handles into her hand, and pulled her after him to the door and outside.

"You know timing is vital. Where is your car?"

"I have no car."

They were running now, running down a narrow street with no lights, probably one of the fascinating streets she explored by day that, as a captive by night, was threatening and terrifying. It was black dark, yet the shadow of a small car emerged against an aging building, so familiar in the redolence of mold and must that she could almost place it...

Still talking about the car she didn't bring, he no longer made any effort to keep his voice low,

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but permitted his anger full release.

"I'll report you. You were supposed to follow me in a fast car to pick me up afterward. All right. You'll have to drive this one, and if you get out, they'll send you back, you can be sure of that. You were taught that you are not allowed to make mistakes."

He unlocked the car door and opened it. A small light came on in the back revealing boxes marked *"Peligre; Se Prohibe Fumar,"* and in plain English, "Explosives."

Leaning over, he began reading the note by the weak light.

He had released her. She could run for help. But then he would leave immediately and get to the port. Softly, she lay her umbrella on the wet cobbles. She stepped back, raised her violin case, and ran forward crashing the case, with all of her young strength, against the side of his head. He went down without a cry.

Turning, she ran down the cobbles and tore around the corner into the street, straight into the arms of the boy in the leather jacket. A car glided silently and without lights along the curb.

The car stopped and both doors were flung open.

All of the terror that she had held in that afternoon rose up within her. She threw back her head, hugged her violin, and screamed. The boy in the leather jacket whirled out around her and ran into the cobbled street.

Sirens sounded in the distance.

A hand touched her shoulder. Beyond fear, she looked up into the face of the tall thin man in the oval glasses. He held a small flashlight on an official-looking card.

"Inspector Lopez, *Senorita*," he said, pocketing the card. "And this is *Senora Maria Mendoza*, also of the service, better known as 'guardian of the port.' "

Two fire engines, and a van spilling police, poured into the narrow cobbled street after the tall thin man.

Carla turned to the flower woman.

"Senora Mendoza, if I hurry, I might catch Professor Murillo and ride home with him."

The woman looked down, her face impassive. "My son will take you home as soon as he has secured that car."

The kaleidoscope stopped twirling: Carla stood in the rain at the flower stall. The blond young man reached out to the flower woman...with a stiletto in his hand. The dark young man grabbed it, crashed into him, and he fell to the ground at her feet...

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the day the fish were fresh

by Arthur Moore

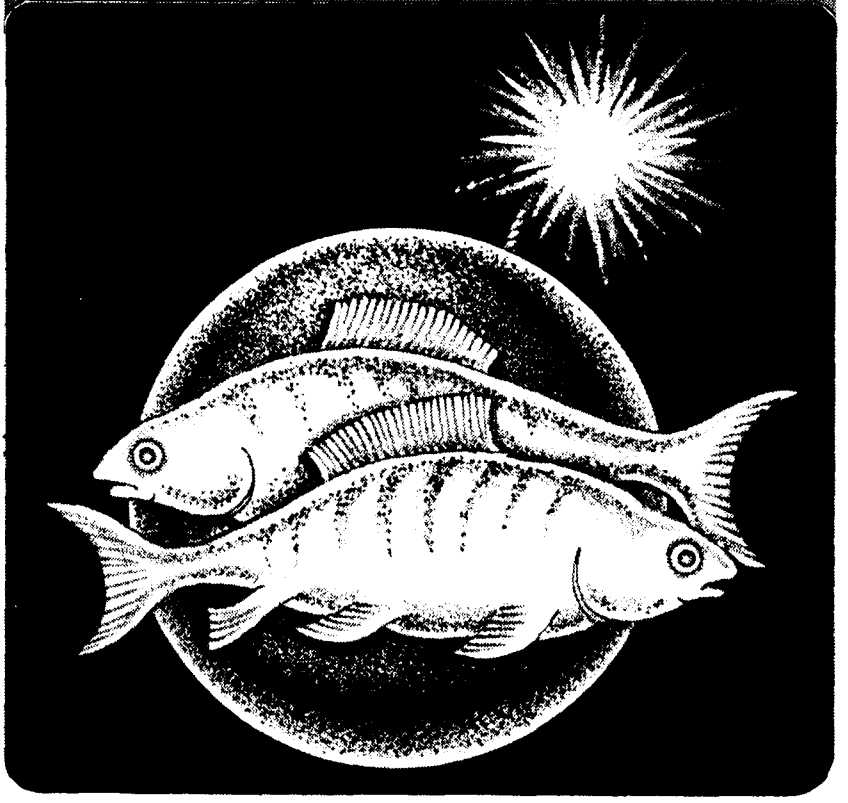

Illustration by David Wool

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Once in a long while I stumble into a coincidence. I was having lunch with Gregori in a little cellar-like room he fancies, because the chef is known for *Homard aux Aromates*, and over wine, Gregori mentioned General Salze.

"You're the one who can find me the General," Gregori said. "It is worth the pennies off my dead mother's eyes." He waved a long cigarette. "That is a figure of speech, of course; I will pay you much more. And when you find him, I will kill him with my own hands, personally." He gave me a heavy-lidded glance and filled my glass again.

I did not doubt him for an instant. But I said, "It's impossible, Gregori. Ask me instead to bring you the KGB's code books. I can more easily slip into the Kremlin."

He acknowledged my joke with a fleeting smile. "He has not seen his wife in fifteen months, Alexi. A beautiful woman like that. Can you imagine it? Wouldn't you dare anything for such a woman?"

"Maybe," I said. "But not if I knew *you* were waiting for me." Gregori never forgot a grudge, and his score against General Salze would fill thick volumes. Years ago, he had sent agents to kill Salze, but Salze's right hand man, Karoli, had seen to it they did not succeed. So Gregori waited, like a huge furry spider, his web drawn about the place where Salze's wife resided. Nothing she did escaped him.

And General Salze traveled, never remaining in one house for very long. I was told he used a variety of disguises; he knew Gregori as well as anyone. And feared him.

Certain kinds of information are like fish, not worth a centime unless they're fresh. So, if you're playing both ends against the middle, as I am, freshness is often a problem. One must find a buyer in time.

Because I speak six languages, including Russian, which we spoke at home when we didn't speak French, I happened to be in the right place at the right time. I mentioned coincidences? The very day after I had lunch with Gregori, I overheard a conversation. General Salze was coming at once, into the city! No less a personage than Karoli, his most trusted friend, had appeared.

Naturally, I was astonished. I inquired by secret methods and went at once to see Karoli, who was staying with a friend.

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I had to wait in a hallway, smoking a half dozen cigarettes, before I was admitted. Karoli received me in a bedroom. He was standing at a window, hands clasped behind him, and when he turned I saw that he looked much older.

He said, "Hello, Alexi. You have something to sell?"

"Not a great deal," I replied. "Do you know that Gregori is here in the city and wishes to kill the General?"

He came toward me. "We were told that he was ill. This is not true?"

"He *was* ill. No longer. He is as dangerous as ever."

He nodded. "While we were in Pakistan, we heard that he was dying."

"I had lunch with him yesterday; I assure you, he is not dying."

"Ah. Did he speak of the General?"

"Yes. He will never forget. He swears he will kill the General with his own hands."

Karoli nodded again. "Does he know that the General is coming here?"

"Certainly not. I am positive. He would have mentioned it to me. He is savage about General Salze."

Karoli almost smiled. "And you will not tell him?" He looked at me keenly.

I drew myself up. "Of course not!"

Karoli seemed to relax. "We will pay you to be silent, my good friend. I know I can depend on you. The General will be here in three days."

"You can depend on me," I said firmly.

He indicated a sideboard. "There is money, Alexi. Take it with my blessing. And say nothing to anyone."

I picked up the bills, a good wad of them, and smiled at Karoli. At the door, I bowed, and then left quickly.

I took a taxi to Gregori's house at once. His man admitted me and I was soon shown into Gregori's presence. He raised his brows. "What is it, Alexi?"

"General Salze will be here, in this city, in three days."

His eyes widened. "I cannot believe it!"

"It is true, Gregori. He comes to see his wife — or take her away."

Gregori had been sitting. He rose and walked to the window, his hands closing into fists. "Extraordinary!" He

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frowned at me. "How do you know this?"

"My s-sources, Gregori... " I spread my hands. "I cannot reveal them!"

"Damn your sources. How can I be positive this is so?"

"I swear to you I have it on the highest authority."

He stared at me with narrowed eyes, chewing his lower lip. He took a breath. "It is true there has been unusual movement at his wife's apartment of late... "

"She is preparing for her husband."

"Ummm. Very well." He went to a tall Chinese chest, opened a drawer and brought out a wallet. He extracted a number of bills and thrust them at me. "But I warn you, Alexi, if you have sold me false information, you will regret it."

"Have no fear, Gregori. It is true." I hurried to the door and down to the street clutching my money.

I knew exactly what Gregori would do. General Salze's wife did not live fashionably. Her apartment was over a store building on the *Rue de la Becquet*, known as *Un Chandelier*. Gregori would rent a room facing the street, directly across from the apartment. As usual, his men would be hidden about the street. Gregori would put a slug from a high-powered rifle in Salze when he arrived — simple, effective, direct. He would leave the rifle behind for the police to knot their brows over. And Salze would be dead.

However, it did not happen that way. I had a telephone call, three days later, from Karoli, and met him in a small bistro, miles away across the city. We were in the middle of lunch when we heard the news on a small radio Karoli had brought with him. "I am always interested in the news," he said as he switched it on. "Are you not as well?"

The announcer said, "A building has been blown up on the *Rue de la Becquet*, directly across from *Un Chandelier*. The police have given out no statement as yet... "

"How sad," Karoli said, turning off the radio. "I deplore violence, don't you?"

I was amazed. "How did you know Gregori would be there?"

"It is my business to know people. I know *you*, for instance." He passed me a bowl. "Try this sauce, Alexi, it is exquisite."

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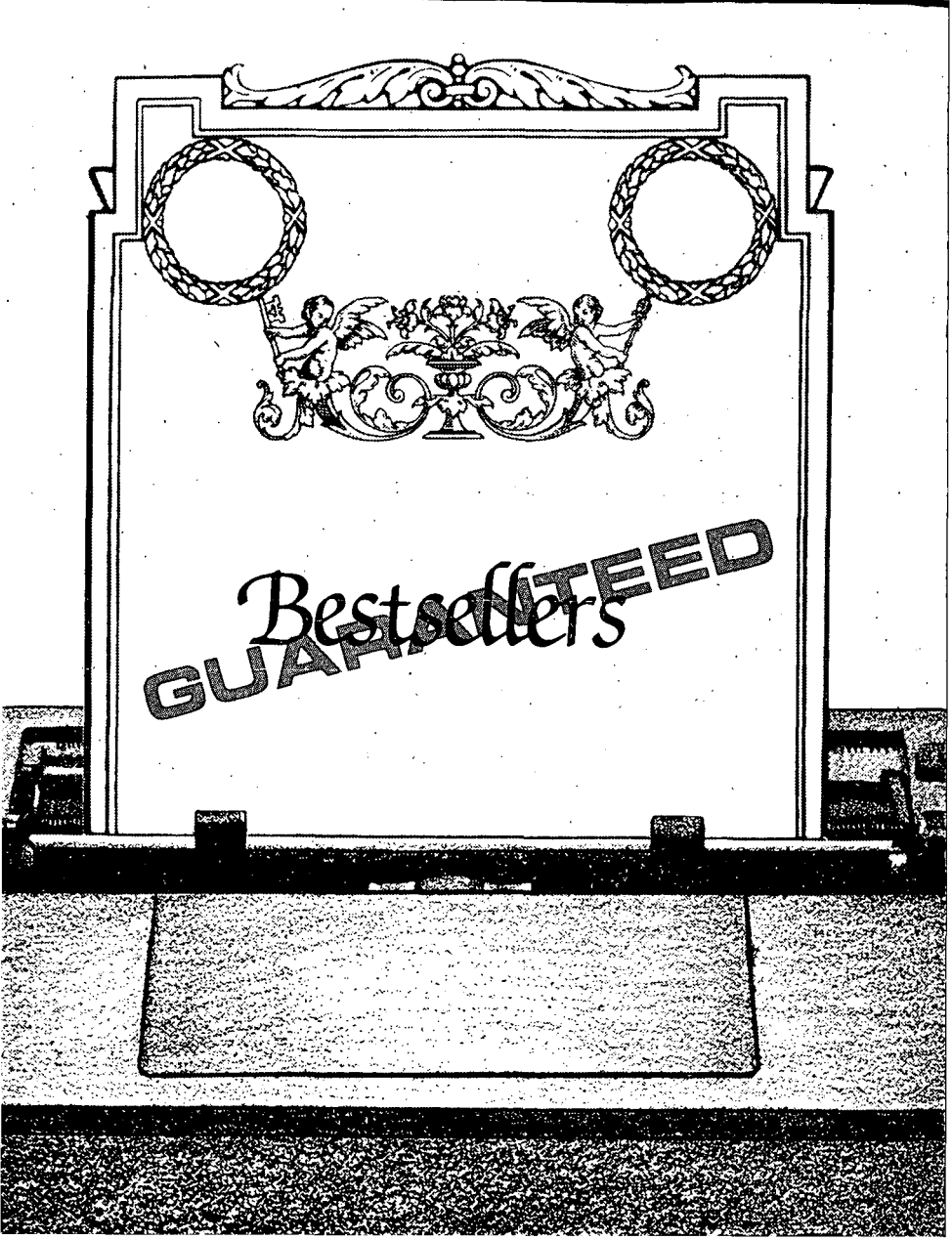

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by Joe R. Lansdale

Larry had a headache, as he often did. It was those all night stints at the typewriter, along with his job and his boss, Fraggerty, yelling for him to fry the burgers faster, to dole them out lickity-split on mustard-covered sesame seed buns.

Burgers and fries, typing paper and typewriter ribbons — the ribbons as grey and faded as the thirty-six years of his life. There really didn't seem to be any reason to keep on living. Another twenty to thirty years of this would be foolish. Then again, that seemed the only alternative. He was too cowardly to take his own life.

Washing his face in the bathroom sink, Larry jerked a rough paper towel from the rack and dried off, looking at himself in the mirror. He was starting to look like all those hacks of writer mythology. The little guys who turned out the drek copy. The ones with the blue-veined, alcohol noses and the eyes like volcanic eruptions.

"My God," he thought, "I look forty easy. Maybe even forty-five."

"You gonna stay in the can all day?" a voice yelled through the door. It was Fraggerty, waiting to send him back to the grill and the burgers. The guy treated him like a bum.

A sly smile formed on Larry's face as he thought: "I am a bum. I've been through three marriages, sixteen jobs, eight typewriters, and all I've got to show for it are a dozen articles, all of them in obscure magazines that either paid in copies or pennies." He wasn't even as good as the hack he looked like. The hack could at least point to a substantial body of work, drek or not.

And I've been at this...God, twelve years! An article a year. Some average. Not even enough to pay back his typing supplies.

He thought of his friend Mooney — or James T. Mooney, as he was known to his fans. Yearly, he wrote a bestseller.

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It was a bestseller before it hit the stands. And except for Mooney's first novel, *The Goodbye Reel*, a detective thriller, all of them had been dismal. In fact, dismal was too kind a word. But the public lapped them up.

What had gone wrong with his own career? He used to help Mooney with his plots; in fact, he had helped him work out his problems on *The Goodbye Reel*, back when they had both been scrounging their livings and existing out of a suitcase. Then Mooney had moved to Houston, and a year later *The Goodbye Reel* had hit the stands like an atomic bomb. Made record sales in hardback and paper, and gathered in a movie deal that boggled the imagination.

Being honest with himself, Larry felt certain that he could say he was a far better writer than Mooney. More commercial, even. So why had Mooney gathered the laurels while he bagged burgers and ended up in a dirty restroom contemplating the veins in his nose?

It was almost too much to bear. He would kill to have a bestseller. Just one. That's all he'd ask. Just one.

"Tear the damned crapper out of there and sit on it behind the grill!" Fraggerty called through the door. "But get out here. We got customers lined up down the block."

Larry doubted that, but he dried his hands, combed his hair and stepped outside.

Fraggerty was waiting for him. Fraggerty was a big fat man with bulldog jowls and perpetual blossoms of sweat beneath his meaty arms. Mid-summer, dead of winter — he had them.

"Hey," Fraggerty said, "you work here or what?"

"Not any more," Larry said. "Pay me up."

"What?"

"You heard me, fat ass. Pay up!"

"Hey, don't get tough about it. All right. Glad to see you hike."

Five minutes later, Larry was leaving the burger joint, a fifty dollar check in his pocket.

He said aloud: "Job number seventeen."

The brainstorm had struck him right when he came out of the restroom. He'd go see Mooney. He and Mooney had been great friends once, before all that money and a new way of living had carried Mooney back and forth to Houston and numerous jet spots around the country and

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overseas.

Maybe Mooney could give him a connection, an *in*, as it was called in the business. Before, he'd been too proud to ask, but now he didn't give a damn if he had to crawl and lick boots. He had to sell his books; had to let the world know he existed.

Without letting the landlord know, as he owed considerable back rent, he cleaned out his apartment.

Like his life, there was little there. A typewriter, copies of his twelve articles, a few clothes and odds and ends. There weren't even any books. He'd had to sell them all to pay his rent three months back.

In less than twenty minutes, he snuck out without being seen, loaded the typewriter and his two suitcases in the trunk of his battered Chevy, and looked up at the window of his dingy apartment. He lifted his middle finger in salute, climbed in the car and drove away.

Mooney was easy to find. His estate looked just the part for the residence of a bestselling author. A front lawn the size of a polo field, a fountain of marble out front, and a house that looked like a small English castle. All this near downtown Houston.

James T. Mooney looked the part, too. He answered the door in a maroon smoking jacket with matching pajamas. He had on a pair of glossy leather bedroom slippers that he could have worn with a suit and tie. His hair was well-groomed with just the right amount of grey at the temples. There was a bit of a strained look about his eyes, but other than that he was the picture of health and prosperity.

"Well, I'll be," Mooney said. "Larry Melford. Come in."

The interior of the house made the outside look like a barn. There were paintings and sculptures and shelves of first edition books. On one wall, blown up to the size of movie posters and placed under glass and frame, were copies of the covers of his bestsellers. All twelve of them. A thirteenth glass and frame stood empty beside the others, waiting for the inevitable.

They chatted as they walked through the house, and Mooney said, "Let's drop off in the study. We can be comfortable there. I'll have the maid bring us some coffee or iced tea."

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"I hope I'm not interrupting your writing," Larry said.

"No, not at all. I'm finished for the day. I usually just work a couple of hours a day."

"A couple hours a day?" thought Larry. A serpent of envy crawled around in the pit of his stomach. For the last twelve years, he had worked a job all day and had written away most of the night, generally gathering no more than two to three hours sleep a day. And here was Mooney writing these monstrous bestsellers and he only wrote a couple of hours in the mornings.

Mooney's study was about the size of Larry's abandoned apartment. And it looked a hell of a lot better. One side of the room was little more than a long desk covered with a word processor and a duplicating machine. The rest of the room was taken up by a leather couch and rows of bookshelves containing nothing but Mooney's work. Various editions of foreign publications, special collectors' editions, the leather-bound Christmas set, the paperbacks, the bound galleys of all the novels. Mooney was surrounded by his success.

"Sit down; take the couch," Mooney said, hauling around his desk chair. "Coffee or tea? I'll have the maid bring it."

"No, I'm fine."

"Well then, tell me about yourself."

Larry opened his mouth to start, and that's when it fell out. He just couldn't control himself. It was as if a dam had burst open and all the water of the world was flowing away. The anguish, the misery, the years of failure found expression.

When he had finished telling it all, his eyes were glistening. He was both relieved and embarrassed. "So you see, Mooney, I'm just about over the edge. I'm craving success like an addict craves a fix. I'd kill for a bestseller."

Mooney's face seemed to go lopsided. "Watch that kind of talk."

"I mean it. I'm feeling so small right now, I'd have to look up to see a snake's belly. I'd lie, cheat, steal, kill — anything to get published in a big way. I don't want to die and leave nothing of me behind."

"And you don't want to miss out on the good things either, right?"

"Damned right. You've got it."

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"Look, Larry, worry less about the good things and just write your books. Ease up some, but do it your own way. You may never have a big bestseller, but you're a good writer, and eventually you'll crack and be able to make a decent living."

"Easy for you to say, Mooney."

"In time, with a little patience..."

"I'm running out of time and patience. I'm emotionally drained, whipped. What I need is an *in*, Mooney, an *in*. A name. Anything that can give me a break."

"Talent is the name of the game, Larry, not an *in*," Mooney said very softly.

"Don't give me that garbage. I've got talent and you know it. I used to help you with the plots of your short stories. And your first novel — remember the things I worked out for you there? I mean, come on, Mooney. You've read my writing. It's good. Damned good! I need help. An *in* can't hurt me. It may not help me much, but it's got to give me a damn sight better chance than I have now."

Larry looked at Mooney's face. Something seemed to be moving there behind the eyes and taut lips. He looked sad, and quite a bit older than his age. Well, okay. So he was offended by being asked right out to help a fellow writer. That was too bad. Larry just didn't have the pride and patience anymore to beat around the bush.

"An *in*, huh?" Mooney finally said.

"That's right."

"You sure you wouldn't rather do it your way?"

"I've been doing it my way for twelve years. I want a break, Mooney."

Mooney nodded solemnly. He went over to his desk and opened a drawer. He took out a small, white business card and brought it over to Larry.

It read:

BESTSELLERS GUARANTEED
Offices in New York, Texas, California
and
Overseas

The left hand corner of the card had a drawing of an open book, and the right hand corner had three phone numbers.

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One of them was a Houston number.

"I met a lady when I first moved here," Mooney said, "a big name author in the romance field. I sort of got this thing going with her...finally asked her for...an *in*. And she gave me this card. We don't see each other anymore, Larry. We stopped seeing each other the day she gave it to me."

Larry wasn't listening. "This an editor?"

"No."

"An agent?"

"No."

"Publisher, book packager?"

"None of those things and a little of all, and a lot more."

"I'm not sure... "

"You wanted your *in*, so there it is. You just call that number. And Larry, do me a favor. Never come here again."

The first thing Larry did when he left Mooney's was find a telephone booth. He dialed the Houston number and a crisp female voice answered: "Bestsellers Guaranteed."

"Are you the one in charge?"

"No sir, just hold on and I'll put you through to someone who can help you."

Larry tapped his quarter on the phone shelf till a smooth-as-well-water male voice said: "B.G. here. May I be of assistance?"

"Uh...yes, a friend of mine...a Mr. James T. Mooney — "

"Of course, Mr. Mooney."

"He suggested...he gave me a card. Well, I'm a writer. My name is Larry Melford. To be honest, I'm not exactly sure what Mooney had in mind for me. He just suggested I call you."

"All we need to know is that you were recommended by Mr. Mooney. Where are you now?"

Larry gave the address of the *Seven Eleven* phone booth.

"Why don't you wait there...oh, say...twenty minutes, and we'll send a car to pick you up? That suit you?"

"Sure, but... "

"I'll have an agent explain it to you when he gets there, okay?"

"Yes, yes, that'll be fine."

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Larry hung up and stepped outside to lean on the hood of his car. By golly, he thought, that Mooney does have connections, and now after all these years, my thirteenth year of trying, maybe, just maybe, I'm going to get connected, too.

He lit a cigarette and watched the August heat waves bounce around the *Seven Eleven* lot, and twenty minutes later, a tan, six-door limousine pulled up next to his Chevy.

The man driving the limo wore a chauffeur's hat and outfit. He got out of the car and walked around to the tinted, far backseat window and tapped gently on the glass. The window slid down with a short whoosh. A man dressed in black with black hair, a black mustache and thick-rimmed black shades, looked out at Larry. He said, "Mr. Melford?"

"Yes," Larry said.

"Would you like to go around to the other side? Herman will open the door for you."

After Larry had slid onto the seat and Herman had closed the door behind him, his eyes were drawn to the plush interior of the car. Encased in the seat in front of them was a phone, a television set and a couple of panels that folded out. Larry felt certain one of them would be a small bar. Air-conditioning hummed softly. The car was nice enough and large enough to live in.

He looked across the seat at the man in black, who was extending his hand. They shook. The man in black said, "Just call me James, Mr. Melford."

"Fine. This is about...writing? Mooney said he could give me a...connection. I mean, I have work, plenty of it. Four novels, a couple of dozen short stories, a novella — of course I know that length is a dog to sell, but ..."

"None of that matters," James said.

"This *is* about writing?"

"This is about bestsellers, Mr. Melford. That is what you want, isn't it? To be a bestselling author?"

"More than anything."

"Then you're our man and we're your organization."

Herman had eased in behind the wheel. James leaned forward over the seat and said firmly, "Drive us around." Leaning back, James touched a button on the door panel and a thick glass rose out of the seat in front of them and clicked into place in a groove in the roof.

"Now," James said, "shall we talk?"

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As they drove, James explained. "I'm the agent assigned to you, and it's up to me to see if I can convince you to join our little gallery. But, if you should sign on with us, we expect you to remain loyal. You must consider that we offer a service that is unique, unlike any offered anywhere. We can guarantee that you'll hit the bestseller list once a year, every year, as long as you're with us.

"Actually, Mr. Melford, we're not a real old organization, and though I have a hard time remembering the exact year we were founded, it predated the Kennedy assassination by a year."

"That would be sixty-two," Larry said.

"Yes, yes, of course. I'm terrible at years. But it's only lately that we've come into our own. Consider the bad state of publishing right now, then consider the fact that our clients have each had a bestseller this year — and they will next year, no matter how bad publishing may falter. Our clients may be the only ones with books, but each of their books will be a bestseller, and their success will, as it does every year, save the industry."

"You're a packager?"

"No. We don't actually read the books, Mr. Melford, we just make sure they're bestsellers. You can write a book about the Earth being invaded by giant tree toads from the moon, if you like, and we will guarantee it will be a bestseller."

"My God, you are connected."

"You wouldn't believe the connections we have."

"And what does your organization get out of this? How much of a percentage?"

"We don't take a dime."

"What?"

"Not a dime. For our help, for our guarantee that your books will be bestsellers, we ask only one thing. A favor. One favor a year. A favor for each bestseller."

"What's the favor?"

"We'll come to that in a moment. But before we do, let me make sure you understand what we have to offer. I mean, if you were successful — and I mean no offense by this — then you wouldn't be talking to me now. You need help. We can offer help. You're in your mid-thirties, correct? Yes, I thought so. Not really old, but a bit late to start a new career

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plan. People do it, but it's certainly no piece of cake, now, is it?"

Larry found that he was nodding in agreement.

"So," James continued, "what we want to do is give you success. We're talking money in the millions of dollars, Mr. Melford. Fame. Respect. Most anything you'd want would be at your command. Exotic foods and wines? A snap of the fingers. Books? Cars? Women? A snap of the fingers. Anything your heart desires and it's yours."

"But I have to make a small, initial investment, right?"

"Ah, suspicious by nature, are you?"

"Wouldn't you be? My God, you're offering me the world."

"So I am. But no...no investment. Picture this, Mr. Melford. You might get lucky and sell your work, might even have a bestseller. But the slots are getting smaller and smaller for new writers. And one reason for that is that our writers, our clients, are filling those slots, Mr. Melford. If it's between your book and one of our client's, and yours is ten times better written, our client will still win out. Every time."

"What you're saying is, the fix is in?"

"A crude way of putting it, but rather accurate. Yes."

"What about talent, craftsmanship?"

"I wouldn't know about any of that. I sell success, not books."

"But it's the public that puts out its money for these books. They make or break an author. How can you know what they'll buy?"

"Our advertising system is the best in the world. We know how to reach the public and how to convince. We also use subliminals, Mr. Melford. We flash images on television programs, theater films; we hide them in the art of wine and cigarette ads. Little things below conscious perception, but images that lock tight to the subconscious mind. People who would not normally pick up a book will buy our bestsellers."

"Isn't that dishonest?"

"Who's to tell in this day and age what's right and wrong? It's relative, don't you think, Mr. Melford?"

Larry didn't say anything.

"Look. The public pictures writers as rich, all of them. They don't realize that the average full-time writer makes four thousand dollars or less a year. Most of them are out there starving and for what? Get on the winning side for a change,

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Mr. Melford. Otherwise, spend the rest of your life living in roach motels and living off the crumbs tossed you by the publishing world. And believe me, Mr. Melford, if you fail to join up with us, crumbs are all you'll get. If you're lucky."

The limousine had returned to the *Seven Eleven* parking lot. They were parked next to Larry's car.

"I suppose," James said, "we've come to that point that the bullfighters call 'the moment of truth.' You sign on with us and you'll be on Easy Street for the rest of your life."

"But we haven't talked terms."

"No, we haven't. It's at this point that I must ask you to either accept or turn down our offer, Mr. Melford. Once I've outlined the terms, you must be in full agreement with us."

"Accept before I hear what this favor you've talked about is?"

"That's correct. Bestseller or Bohemian, Mr. Melford. Which is it? Tell me right now. My time is valuable."

Larry paused only a moment. "Very well. Count me in. In for a penny, in for a pound. What's the favor?"

"Each year, you assassinate someone for us."

Larry dove for the door handle, but it wouldn't open. It had been locked electronically. James grabbed him by the wrist and held him tightly, so tightly Larry thought his bones would shatter.

"I wouldn't," James said. "After what I've told you, you step out of this car and they'll find you in a ditch this afternoon, obviously the victim of some hit and run driver."

"That's...that's murder."

"Yes, it is." James said. "Listen to me. You assassinate whomever we choose. We're not discriminating as far as sex, color, religion or politics goes. Anyone who gets in our way dies. Simple as that. You see, Mr. Melford, we are a big organization. Our goal is world domination. You, and all our clients, are little helpers toward that goal. Who is more respected than a bestselling author? Who is allowed in places where others would not be allowed? Who is revered by public figures and the general public alike? An author — a bestselling author."

"But...it's murder."

"There will be nothing personal in it. It'll just be your part of the contract. One assassination a year that we'll arrange."

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"But, if you're so connected...why do it this way? Why not just hire a hit man?"

"In a sense, I have."

"I'm not an assassin. I've never even fired a gun."

"The amateur is in many ways better than the professional. He doesn't fall into a pattern. When the time comes, we will show you what you have to do. If you decide to be with us, that is."

"And if not?"

"I told you a moment ago. The ditch. The hit and run driver."

Suddenly, Herman was standing at the door, his hand poised to open it.

"Which is it, Mr. Melford? I'm becoming impatient. A ditch or a bestseller? And if you have any ideas about going to the police, don't. We have friends there, and you might accidently meet one. Now, your decision."

"I'm in," Larry said, softly. "I'm in."

"Good," James said, taking Larry's hand. "Welcome aboard. You get one of those books of yours out, pick out a publisher, and mail it in. And don't bother with return postage. We'll take care of the rest. Congratulations."

James tapped the window at Herman. The door opened. Larry got out. And just before the door closed, James said, "If you should have trouble coming up with something, getting something finished, just let me know and we'll see that it gets written for you."

Larry stood on the sidewalk nodding dumbly. Herman returned to the driver's seat, and a moment later the tan limo from *Bestsellers Guaranteed* whispered away.

James was as good as his word. Larry mailed off one of his shopworn novels, a thriller entitled *Texas Backlash*, and a contract for a half million dollars came back, almost by return mail.

Six months later, the book hit the bestseller list and rode there for a comfortable three months. It picked up a two million dollar paperback sale and a bigshot movie producer purchased it for twice that amount.

Larry now had a big mansion outside of Nacogdoches, Texas, with a maid, a cook, two secretaries and a professional yard man. Any type of food he wanted was his for the ask-

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ing. Once he had special seafood flown in from the East Coast to Houston and hauled from there to his door by refrigerated truck.

Any first edition book he wanted was now within his price range. He owned four cars, two motorcycles, a private airplane and a yacht.

He could own anything — even people. They hopped at his every word, his most casual suggestion. He had money and people wanted to satisfy those with money. Who knows, maybe it would rub off on them.

And there were women. Beautiful women. There was even one he had grown to care for, and believed cared for him instead of his money and position. Lovely Luna Malone.

But in the midst of all this finery, there was the favor. The thought of it rested on the back of his mind like a waiting vulture. And when a year had gone by, the vulture swooped in.

On a hot August day, the tan limo from *Bestsellers Guaranteed* pulled up the long, scenic drive to Larry's mansion. A moment later, Larry and James were in his study and Herman stood outside the closed door with his arms akimbo, doing what he did best. Waiting, silently.

James was dressed in black again. He still wore the thick-framed sun shades. "You know what I've come for, don't you?"

Larry nodded. "The favor."

"On March fifteenth, *Bestsellers Guaranteed* will arrange for an autograph party in Austin for your new bestseller, whatever that may be. At eleven-fifteen, you will excuse yourself to go upstairs to the men's room. Next door to it is a janitor's lounge. It hasn't been used in years. It's locked but we will provide you with the key.

"At the rear of the lounge is a restroom. Lift off the back of the commode and you will discover eight small packages taped to the inside. Open these and fit them together and you'll have a very sophisticated air rifle. One of the packages will contain a canister of ice, and in the middle, dyed red, you will find a bullet-shaped projectile of ice. The air gun can send that projectile through three inches of steel without the ice shattering.

"You will load the gun, go to the window, and at exactly eleven-twenty five, the Governor will drive by in an open car

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in the midst of a parade. A small hole has been cut in the window. It will exactly accommodate the barrel of the rifle and the scope will fit snugly against the glass. You will take aim, and in a matter of seconds, your favor for this year will be done."

"Why the Governor?"

"That is our concern."

"I've never shot a rifle."

"We'll train you. You have until March. You won't need to know much more than how to put the rifle together and look through the scope. The weapon will do the rest."

"If I refuse?"

"The bestselling author of *Texas Backlash* will be found murdered in his home by a couple of burglars, and a couple of undesirables will be framed for the crime. Don't you think that has a nicer ring to it than the hit and run program I offered you before? Or perhaps, as a warning, we'll do something to your lady friend. What's her name...Luna?"

"You wouldn't!"

"If it would offer incentive or achieve our desired goals, Mr. Melford, we would do anything."

"You bastard!"

"That'll be quite enough, Mr. Melford. You've reaped the rewards of our services, and now we expect to be repaid. It seems a small thing to ask for your success — and certainly you wouldn't want to die at the hands of other bestselling authors, the ones who will ultimately be your assassins."

In spite of the air-conditioning, Larry had begun to sweat. "Just who are you guys, really?"

"I've told you. We're an organization with big plans. What we sponsor more than anything else, Mr. Melford, is moral corruption. We feed on those who thrive on greed and ego; put them in positions of power and influence. We belong to a group, to put it naively, who believe that once the silly concepts of morality and honor break down, then we, who really know how things work, can take control and make them work to our advantage. To put it even more simply, Mr. Melford. We will own it all."

"I...I can't just cold-bloodedly murder someone."

"Oh, I think you can. I've got faith in you. Look around you, Mr. Melford. Look at all you've got. Think of what you've got to lose, then tell me if you can murder from a distance some-

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one you don't even know. I'll wait outside with Herman for your answer. You have two minutes."

From the March fifteenth edition of *The Austin Statesman*, a front page headline: "GOVERNOR ASSASSINATED, ASSASSIN SOUGHT"

From the same issue, page 4B: "BESTSELLING AUTHOR, LARRY MELFORD, SIGNS BOOKS"

Six months later, in the master bedroom of Larry Melford's estate, Larry was sitting nude in front of the dresser mirror, clipping unruly nose hairs. On the bed behind him, nude, dark, luscious, lay Luna Malone. There was a healthy glow of sweat on her body as she lay with two pillows propped under her head, her raven hair like an explosion of ink against their whiteness.

"Larry," she said, "you know, I've been thinking...I mean there's something I've been wanting to tell you, but haven't said anything about because...well, I was afraid you might get the wrong idea. But now that we've known each other a while, and things look solid...Larry, I'm a writer."

Larry quit clipping his nose hairs. He put the clipper on the dresser and turned very slowly. "You're what?"

"I mean, I want to be. And not just now, not just this minute. I've always wanted to be. I didn't tell you, because I was afraid you'd laugh, or worse, think I'd only got to know you so you could give me an *in*, but I've been writing for years and have sent book after book, story after story in, and just know I'm good, and well..."

"You want me to look at it?"

"Yeah, but more than that, Larry. I need an *in*. It's what I've always wanted. To write a bestseller. I'd kill for..."

"Get out! Get the hell out!"

"Larry, I didn't meet you for that reason..."

"Get the hell out or I'll throw you out."

"Larry..."

"Now!" He stood up from the chair, grabbed her dressing gown. "Just go. Leave everything. I'll have it sent to you. Get dressed and never let me see you again."

"Aren't you being a little silly about this? I mean..."

Larry moved as fast as an eagle swooping down on a field mouse. He grabbed her shoulder and jerked her off the bed

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onto the floor.

"All right, you bastard, all right." Luna stood. She grabbed the robe and slipped into it. "So I did meet you for an *in*; what's wrong with that? I bet you had some help along the way. It sure couldn't have been because you're a great writer. I can hardly force myself through that garbage you write."

He slapped her across the cheek so hard she fell back on the bed.

Holding her face, she got up, gathered her clothes and walked stiffly to the bathroom. Less than a minute later, she came out dressed, the robe over her shoulder.

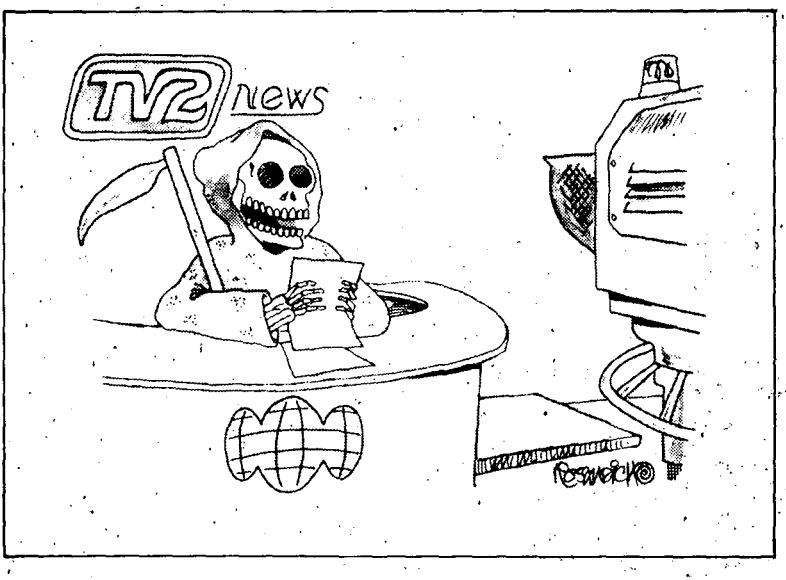
"I'm sorry about hitting you," Larry said. "But I meant what I said about never wanting to see you again."

"You're crazy, man. You know that? Crazy. All I asked you for was an *in*, just . . . "

Luna stopped talking. Larry had lifted his head to look at her. His eyes looked as dark and flat as the twin barrels of a shotgun.

"Don't bother having Francis drive me home. I'll call a cab from downstairs, Mr. Bigshot Writer."

She went out, slamming the bedroom door. Larry got up



"And now for the worldwide news . . . "

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and turned off the light, went back to the dresser chair and sat in the darkness for a long time.

Nearly a year and a half later, not long after completing a favor for *Bestsellers Guaranteed*, and acquiring a somewhat rabid taste for alcoholic beverages, Larry was in the Houston airport waiting to catch a plane for Hawaii for a long vacation, when he saw a woman in the distance who looked familiar. She turned and he recognized her immediately. It was Luna Malone. Still beautiful, a bit more worldly looking, and dressed to the hilt.

She saw him before he could dart away. She waved. He smiled. She came over and shook hands with him. "Larry, you aren't still mad, are you?"

"No, I'm not mad. Good to see you. You look great."

"Thanks."

"Where're you going?"

"Italy. Rome."

"Pope country," Larry said with a smile, but at his words, Luna jumped.

"Yes...Pope country."

The announcer called for the flight to Rome, Italy. Luna and Larry shook hands again and she went away.

Larry, to kill time, went to the airport bookstore. He found he couldn't even look at the big cardboard display with his latest bestseller in it. He didn't like to look at bestsellers by anyone. But something did catch his eye. It was the cardboard display next to his. The book was called *The Little Storm*, and appeared to be one of those steamy romance novels. But what had caught his eyes was the big, emblazoned name of the author — LUNA MALONE.

Larry felt like a python had uncoiled inside of him. He felt worse than he had ever felt in his life.

"Italy. Rome," she had said.

"Pope country," he had said, and she jumped.

Larry stumbled back against the rack of his books, and his clumsiness knocked it over. The books tumbled to the floor. One of them slid between his legs and when he looked down he saw that it had been turned over to its back. There was his smiling face looking up at him. Larry Melford, big name author, bestseller, a man whose books found their way into the homes of millions of readers.

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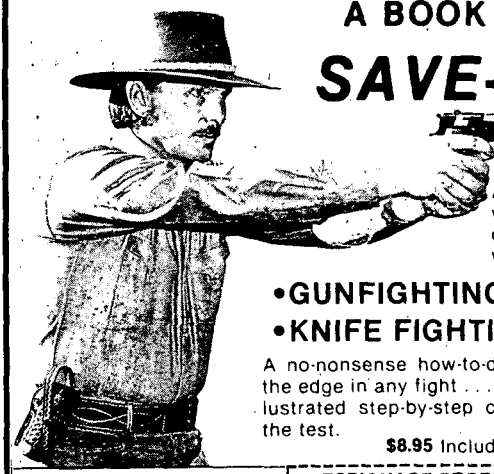
Suddenly, Hawaii was forgotten and Larry was running, running to the nearest pay phone. What had James said about moral corruption? "We feed on those who thrive on greed and ego...once silly concepts of morality and honor break down...we will own it all."

The nightmare had to end. *Bestsellers Guaranteed* had to be exposed. He would wash his hands with blood and moral corruption no more. He would turn himself in.

With trembling hand, he picked up the phone, put in his change, and dialed the police.

From today's *Houston Chronicle*, front page headline: "POPE ASSASSINATED"

From the same edition, the last page before the "Want Ads," the last paragraph: "BESTSELLING AUTHOR MURDERED IN HOME." The story follows: "Police suspect the brutal murder of author Larry Melford occurred when he surprised burglars in the act. Thus far, police have been unable to... "



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Matt Braun is a former army officer and combat instructor who spent many years training troops and civilians in survival methods. Moreover, he's a survivor himself, and in terms you'll never forget, he reveals all the tricks of the trade.

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The Secret of the

It was in the autumn of 1896 that Harry Challenge came to Klokburg, that dazzling European city of castles and gardens, and got sewn up in a burlap sack and tossed into the chill midnight water of beautiful Lake Tauchintz.

Just a week before, Harry, a lean, clean-shaven man of thirty, had been relaxing in Cairo after finishing up a case. Then a cablegram from New York City had come to him.

Dear Son: Haul your lethargic butt to capital of Zaubertania. Meet our client at Grand Imperial Hotel. She is British. Name is Emma Kingsmill. Fears her doddering papa has gone gaga over opera singer. He is noted inventor. I smell big money. Do not dawdle. Your devoted father, the Challenge International Detective Agency.

Harry arrived at the Grand Imperial, in the heart of Klokburg, late on a rain-swept Tuesday evening. The atmosphere of the place was distinctly old-world. The vast lobby and the curving staircases were softly carpeted, the rooms hung with tapestries and decorated in a massive and somewhat gloomy fashion. Although Harry didn't much like big, expensive hotels like this, it was agency policy to stay at them.

While registering, he inquired after their client. Right there, he got his first small surprise. There was no Emma Kingsmill registered at the *Grand Imperial Hotel*, and the slender, moustached clerk assured Harry no such person had ever been registered there nor was expected to be registered in the immediate future. The clerk did, however, with a gesture that bordered on the disdainful, pass Harry a note that had been left for him. In the neatly written message, a Mrs. George Oliver Edge urged him to visit her in her rooms as soon as, and no matter how late, he arrived.

Her suite on the top floor of the six hundred room hotel was large, hushed, and gloomy. Mrs. Edge, however, was young, blonde and decidedly pretty.

As soon as Harry crossed the threshold and closed the door behind him, she rushed up and put her arms around him. "It's

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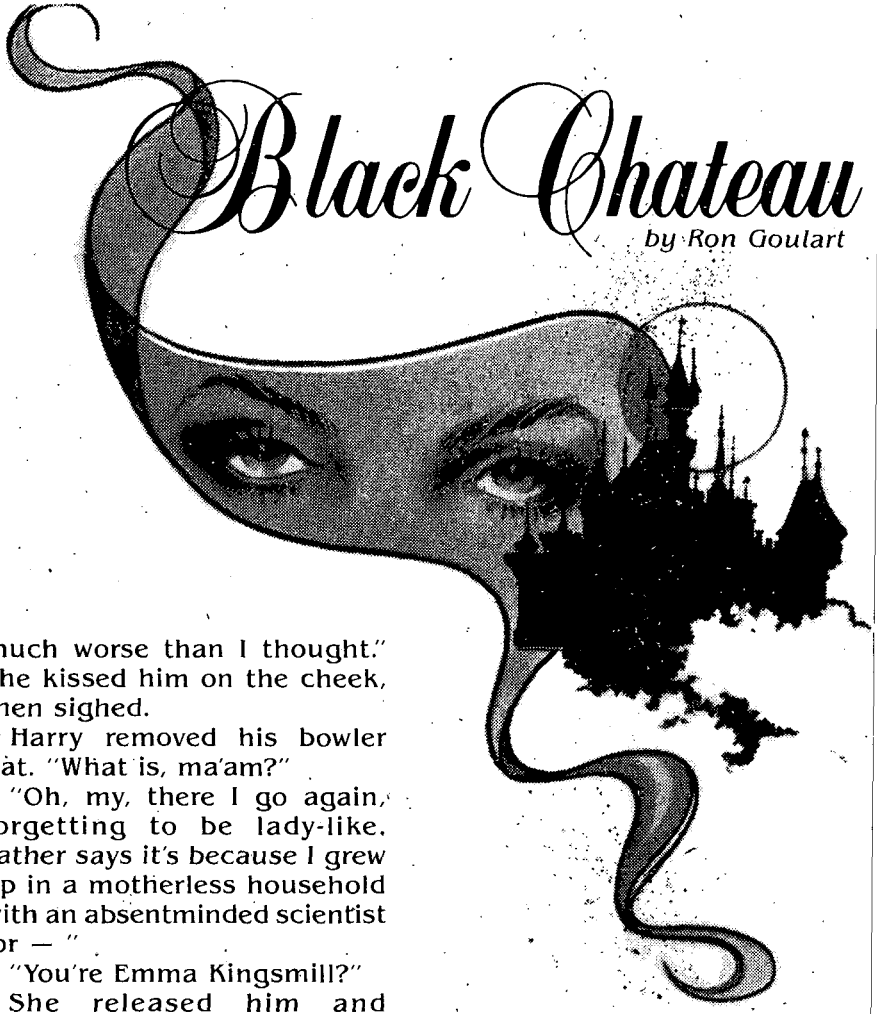
ustration by Rob Richards

Black Chateau

by Ron Goulart



much worse than I thought." She kissed him on the cheek, then sighed.

Harry removed his bowler hat. "What is, ma'am?"

"Oh, my, there I go again, forgetting to be lady-like. Father says it's because I grew up in a motherless household with an absentminded scientist for — "

"You're Emma Kingsmill?"

She released him and stepped back. "You're quite handsome, for a detective," she smiled prettily, blushing slightly. "But there I go again, saying exactly what I think, simply blurting it out. That's all well and good in my novels, but in everyday life one must — "

"Mrs. George Oliver Edge," said Harry, dropping his hat atop a clawfooted table. "That's right. She writes three-decker novels with titles like *The Bloom Gone From The Rose* and *Not Wisely Nor Well, But, Oh My.* That's you?"

"I find it best to write under an assumed name, considering the sort of rather passionate

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fiction I produce." She touched at the low-cut bodice of her pale blue satin gown. "Perhaps you favor the more decadent authors of the so-called — "

"Listen, Miss Kingsmill," he cut in as he sat, uninvited on a ponderous loveseat, "I didn't rush all the way from Cairo to trade literary chitchat with — "

"Yes, you are absolutely right, of course. Would you care for a cup of tea?"

"Nope."

"Good, because I haven't been awfully successful at getting room service at late hours such as this." Emma seated herself in a plump armchair facing him. "By the way, as to why I embraced you upon your arrival. It was purely and merely a reflex action, prompted by my anxious state. I wouldn't want you to think — "

"I won't," Harry assured her. "A private investigator is like a doctor or a priest."

She suddenly laughed. "Oh, I don't fancy I see you in that light at all, Mr. Challenge."

"Maybe you can explain exactly why you hired our agency."

"Is it a large agency?"

"Basically my father and me."

"He seems a gruff man, though I've only dealt with him by way of cables."

"Gruff is one word you could certainly apply to him. Your problem?"

"It's — as I may have mentioned — much worse than I suspected when I arrived here in Klokburg, last week, and decided to retain the famous Challenge International Detective Agency." Emma was tangling her pale, slender fingers together in her lap. "Then, after I surreptitiously followed my poor deluded father here and registered under my pen name, so as to avoid further possibility of scandal for the family name, I began to realize this was more than simply an aging man's folly."

Leaning back in the chair, Harry inquired, "What sort of folly is it then?"

Emma lowered her voice as she replied, "I fear this has to do with international intrigue and espionage, Harry. You don't mind if a client addresses you by your first name?"

"Not at all, Emma. Now, what — "

"I enjoy the way you pronounce my name. There's a distinct, and very virile, American ring to it that...Ah, but there I go again." Pausing, she sighed, then turned away to glance at a rain-spattered window. "Do you know of my father's work?"

Harry had asked some careful questions of a few British contacts in Cairo. "He's a very successful inventor," he answered. "Over the years, he's

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cooked up things like the Kingsmill Rapid Fire Machine Gun, the Kingsmill Poison Gas Bomb, the — "

"Yes, that's my father." The lovely blonde woman shivered. "You can't appreciate what it's like to grow up with one's name associated with so many engines of death and destruction."

"Is there some trouble over a new invention of his?"

She nodded forlornly. "I'm afraid so, Harry," she said. "He has just perfected the Kingsmill Flying Torpedo, a most deadly weapon that all the military bigwigs in our native England are most enthusiastic over. Three weeks ago, alas, father abandoned his snug laboratory at our home in Barsetshire to follow...to follow a...Well, she's an opera singer of sorts. She's rather handsome, in a plump and obvious sort of way."

"Would that be Lily Hope?"

She made a small gasping sound. "Why yes. However did you guess? Or is it that the foolish actions of my poor deluded father are already the subject of malicious gossip in such sun-drenched outposts as Cairo and — "

"Coming here in my carriage from the train station, I noticed quite a lot of posters announcing Lily's concerts."

"Do you know the woman?"

"Met her once in Algiers."

"She's quite old, I believe."

"Only my age. Thirty."

"Really? Then I suppose years of scandalous living have exacted a tremendous toll."

"Your father's plans for this flying torpedo thing," Harry asked, "do you know where they are at the moment?"

Very quietly, Emma commenced sobbing. "You've put your very capable finger, Harry, on the crux of the matter," she said, sniffling. "Father brought the only set of complete plans, as well as a working model of the Kingsmill Flying Torpedo, with him. For safekeeping, I originally thought, though now I am not certain what to think."

"Have you talked to your father since you arrived in Zaubertania?"

She shook her pretty head negatively. "No, but I have kept an eye on him. Wearing a heavy veil, I stationed myself opposite his hotel, the *Prince Otto Plaza*, near the park. I have followed him, most discreetly. Most of his evenings are spent in the Royal Casino, overlooking Lake Tauchnitz. That woman is his constant companion. They drink too much champagne and play at roulette."

"Why do you think the plans are in trouble?"

She lowered her eyes. "I must admit, Harry, that I ventured to break into my father's suite at

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"All at once, he saw a fuzzy ball of light growing above him. Not knowing what it was, he kicked harder."

the *Prince Otto*. There is no trace of his plans or the model there."

"Could be he's hidden them, or had them locked in the hotel safe."

"That is a possibility. Yet the fact that Sir Rowland Fleetway arrived in Klokburg, two days since, leads me to suspect otherwise."

Harry nodded. "Fleetway's a crackerjack agent for the British secret service."

"He is, and a master of disguise as well," she said. "You ought to see the really ingenious disguises he thinks up to wear each night at the casino, while he's spying on my poor father."

Harry stood. "I'll go check on his latest."

"Can you save my father, Harry, from the consequences of his folly? You have not only to separate him from that woman but to retrieve the plans and the working model."

"Sure, I can do that."

"Money, of course, is no object."

"That's going to help," he told her.

The opulent building that housed the world-renowned *Royal Casino Gambling Palace* was perched on a cliffside some two hundred feet above the placid waters of Lake Tauchnitz. A harsh rain was pelting its slanting, red tile roofs and intricate wrought-iron trim, as Harry paid off his carriage and made his way quickly up the wide marble steps. The time was a few minutes shy of midnight.

Inside, it was all glitter and brightness. The recently installed electric lamps caused the three, already impressive, crystal chandeliers to sparkle, and the Oriental carpets and thick maroon drapes to glow. There were over a hundred patrons in the casino's main room, their conversation, pleased laughter, and disappointed sighs mingling with the whir and clatter of the four roulette wheels. On a dais against the far wall, a string quartet was playing something that might have been Mozart. Harry couldn't make out the music against the competing din.

He stood in the wide arched doorway, nonchalantly lighting a cigar and surveying the room.

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First he noticed Sir Rowland Fleetway, got up like an Indian maharajah, seated on a gilded sofa at the left of the room. The British secret service ace was pretending he wasn't observing the roulette table nearest him.

Among the handsomely dressed crowd at the table, Harry spotted the redhaired Lily Hope. She was clad in a gown of white silk, her hair piled high and starred with diamonds. She was about ten pounds heavier than when he'd last encountered her, but still damned attractive.

Next to her, seemingly pleading quietly about something, was a tall, gaunt man in a tailcoat. About sixty, his face had a yellowish cast and his moustache drooped forlornly. After a moment of absently listening to him, Lily shook her head and turned to leave.

Arthur Kingsmill tried to follow, but she said something, something low and terse, and he halted where he was.

The handsome soprano made her way through the crowded gaming room. At the French doors, she hesitated, then pushed out into the night.

Taking another puff of his cigar, Harry decided to follow.

Even though there was a canopy over most of the broad flagstone terrace, the night rain found its way in. The stones were wet and slick, the gargoyles decorating the low stone wall appearing to be even more hunched than usual.

Only Lily Hope and a distraught young man were on the terrace. He was wearing a tuxedo and his light brown hair was disarrayed. From his breast pocket, he tugged a silver pistol.

"You mustn't, Philip, please," Lily was pleading.

"What's the bloody use, Lil. I've lost everything at the gaming tables." Philip struggled against her, striving to get the barrel of the .32 caliber weapon somewhere in the vicinity of his temple.

"But I can easily loan you — "

"No, I shan't accept money from a woman."

"Hey," called Harry, starting to run toward them, "let's not have another suicide here."

"Oh," said Lily, turning to him as he approached, "please help me, whoever you are."

Harry sprinted, grabbing the young man's gun hand. "Never shoot yourself over money," he advised. "In fact — "

"This case," observed Harry, "looks to be a shade rougher than I'd originally anticipated."

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That was as far as he got.

Someone – someone that might well have been Lily, herself, hit him hard behind the ear with a hefty blackjack.

"Damn, I've been flim-flammed," realized Harry as he toppled over into oblivion.

He awakened in Lake Tauchnitz.

At least Harry assumed it was Lake Tauchnitz. Someplace wet and damp, at any rate. He was stitched up inside a smallish coarse sack and sinking rapidly, his watery descent aided by heavy chunks of wrought-iron that were sharing the sack with him.

"Damn fool," he mentioned to himself, "letting Lily set me up like this."

Confident that he'd not come to in time, they hadn't bothered to truss him up. Harry dug inside his soggy evening jacket, eased out the straight razor he made it a policy to carry on his person at all times, and in two tries, managed to get it open.

Only once before, in his eleven years as a world-roaming private operative, had he had to slice his way out of a sack. And in the other instance, six years before, the sack had been draped over a donkey crossing the Gobi Desert.

Cutting and hacking his way free of this one was proving tougher. He was handicapped not only by the chill wetness and eerie blackness but by an incredible, itching, growing desire to open his mouth and take a breath.

At long last, after what felt like a considerable time, he cut an opening and departed from the plummeting sack. Kicking his feet, Harry shot upwards through the dark waters of the midnight lake.

Harry had no way of knowing how deep he'd sunk before coming to and no way of knowing how far he had to climb before he surfaced and reached air.

All at once, he saw a fuzzy ball of light growing above him. It couldn't be the moon, he realized, since the night was overcast. Not knowing what it was, he kicked harder, using the powerful breast stroke he'd first developed when he was a boy swimming in the Atlantic off Long Island.

He hit air. Treading water, he took a grateful breath, and then another.

"Not exactly a marine Venus, yet a welcome sight, nonetheless," observed someone.

Harry blinked. "Lorenzo," he said.

"Considering the circumstances, I won't insist on full billing." The portly magician, wrapped in a cloak and sporting an impressive top hat, was sitting at the oars in a rowboat

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a half dozen feet from the spot where Harry surfaced. He held a lantern in his plump left hand. "Aren't you even a mite surprised at my being here to offer succor?"

"I knew you were in town." Harry swam to the bobbing boat and boosted himself over the gunwale. "Noticed a poster, a small one, on my way from the depot. *The Great Lorenzo, Limited Engagement, Majestic Theatre. Greatest Magician In The World.* Lily Hope had a lot more bills up."

"The dear lady usually manages to upstage me, even finagling herself into the Royal Theatre for her caterwauling." From beneath his dark cloak, Harry's longtime friend produced two brandy glasses.

Harry, shivering, took one. "Lily may be the one who tossed me into the lake." He glanced around. "This is Lake Tauchnitz, isn't it?"

"'Tis indeed, my boy," answered the magician. "They flung you into its scenic depths from the terrace above. Fortunately, the water's sufficiently deep and lacking in sharp rocks hereabouts."

"I am a little nonplussed, though, Lorenzo, as to how you happened to be just exactly here at just exactly now."

After fluffing his impressive sideburns with one gloved hand, the magician reached up and plucked a bottle of brandy out of the rainy air. "Not the best year, this, but you can't always pluck the best on such short notice," he explained, as he poured for them. "I don't relish passing myself off as having any real magical abilities, old chum, yet I must admit I had one of my premonitions about you."

"Saw me being shrouded in a gunnysack, did you?"

"Actually," admitted The Great Lorenzo, "in my vision, it was a weatherbeaten steamer trunk you were in. But I got the time and location of your submersion just exactly right."

After swallowing most of his brandy, and getting his shivering under control, Harry said, "However you did it, Lorenzo, I appreciate the lift." He sniffed at the night. "What's that — if you don't mind my asking — foul odor?"

"Fish. Not certain, being no expert on the finny denizens of this particular picturesque body of water, exactly which sort," said the plump magician. "I borrowed this craft from a local fisherman. Originally, I had intended to warn you in advance, but due to an unfortunate incident between shows, involving a very married countess, I was detained. I arrived only in time to see you plummeting."

"This case," observed Harry,

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dripping some, "looks to be a shade rougher than I'd originally anticipated."

By midday, the sun had reappeared and the winding streets and lanes of Klokburg were bright and warm.

At an outdoor table at the fashionable Nachspeise Cafe, The Great Lorenzo, resplendent in a stylish checkered suit, sat alone, gazing at the pine-covered hills above the city. Absently, he reached up near his ear and plucked a fat lighted cigar out of thin air.

As he puffed at it, a middle-aged Englishman at the next table exclaimed, "Jove, that's deuced clever, wot?"

"Eh?" The magician placed the cigar on the edge of his saucer and turned his attention to the knickered tourist.

"Forgive my intruding on your reverie, sir," the gentleman apologized. "Thing is, don't you know, I couldn't help noticing that impressive bit of — "

"This, you mean?" The Great Lorenzo produced another cigar. "Join me in a smoke."

Chuckling, the English tourist accepted the cigar. "Gad, sir, that's damned impressive. And a first rate Havana at that."

"Perhaps you'd be interested in a few stunts with playing cards?" suggested the magician. "Then we might try, to while away the time — "

"No fleecing, Lorenzo." Harry seated himself in the chair opposite his friend.

"Beg pardon?" The magician assumed a quite guileless expression.

Leaning, the Englishman said to Harry, "Your associate is deuced clever with his hands, wot?"

"Too clever by far," said Harry. "That's why we're taking him back to Manhattan to stand trial for card-sharping. Thus far I haven't used handcuffs, but if he persists in trying to ply his trade, I may have to clamp the darbies on him and — "

"I say!" Hurriedly, the gentleman left his chair, coughed into a gloved hand, and walked swiftly away along the cobblestone street.

The Great Lorenzo snorted. "Puckish is what your sense of humor is, Harry, my lad," he remarked. "I was merely attempting to talk the fellow into buying a ducat for one of my impressive magic shows at the Majestic."

"I've found out quite a bit since last evening," said the detective.

The Great Lorenzo tapped the side of his coffee cup and it refilled itself. "Picked up a few choice tidbits of pertinent information, myself, though I don't know if I wish to pass 'em

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along to a lad who's doing his best to blacken my good name."

"Speaking of black," mentioned Harry, turning in his chair to look toward the hills. "Ah, then you've found out where the fair Lily Hope is residing during her stay in town?"

"That must be the place up there." Harry's eyes were narrowed.

" 'Tis indeed," confirmed the magician. "The Black Chateau, each and every stone of which is the color of ebony. Presiding over the joint is one Baron Waggenheim, a decadent old dog whose full name in these parts is usually given as *Wicked Old Baron Waggenheim*. Though the lecherous chap is pushing eighty-six, he still manages to give a new and fresh meaning to the word bedridden. Rumor has it that no nubile maiden in the vicinity is safe from his — "

"Hush a minute," cautioned Harry.

"What's this? First you malign my honesty and now you attempt to cut off my patter before — "

"Just be quiet until this organ grinder goes by."

Strolling along the sunlit street was a man in Gypsy attire. He carried a hand organ from which he was grinding a merry tune. Perched atop the wheezing instrument was a woebegone monkey.

The Great Lorenzo inquired, "Isn't that Sir Rowland Fleetway of Her Majesty's Secret Service?"

"That's why we're suspending our conversation for a moment."

"Something decidedly wrong with that chimp."

"It's stuffed."

"Ah, yes, that accounts for its distinct lack of vivacity."

"Fleetway's been trying to tail me," said Harry, watching the agent pass on by. "Earlier he was the violet lady in front of my damn hotel. I ditched him."

Tugging at his ample side whiskers, the magician said, "If he's tagging in your wake, my lad, we have to assume he hasn't located those plans you told me about."

"Nope, he hasn't," said Harry. "He's made three visits to the Black Chateau, suitably disguised on each trip, and has come up with nothing thus far."

"Yet it does seem likely, since the golden-throated Lily has pilfered the plans and the working model of this flying torpedo, that she's stashed them where she's staying."

"She probably has, yep. But Fleetway hasn't found 'em."

"Immense place, full of secret panels and passageways, old dungeons, the baron's vast collection of armor and

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miscellaneous clutter," mused The Great Lorenzo. "Be quite a task to find a set of plans in that haystack. By the bye, how does the thing fly?"

"Steam," answered Harry.

"Ah, the wonders of modern science," said the magician. "With dedicated men like Kingsmill at work, the next big war's going to be a very impressive show. You're certain the old boy doesn't still have the plans?"

"Nope, he's more or less finally come to his senses. The reason he's still hanging around Lily is to try to persuade her to give, or sell, the stuff back to him. He's interested in saving face."

"Romance," observed The Great Lorenzo. "The things it leads an otherwise rational man to do. I recall once in Graustark, I came within a hairbreadth of blurting out the secret of my famed *Cabinet of Kublai Khan Illusion* to a lady-in-waiting with a most provocative pair of — "

"We have to get inside the Black Chateau."

"I've anticipated that." Reaching up, he snatched a square of pasteboard from the air. "Here is an invitation to Baron Waggenheim's notorious masked ball, which is to be held this very night at his ebony lodgings."

Harry, grinning, took the invitation. "Your engraving's getting better, Lorenzo."

The magician inflated his chest. "That happens to be an authentic invite, my boy. I had to suffer through breakfast with a monumentally dippy Norwegian princess this morning to get it for you."

"Appreciate your sacrifice. Are you coming with me?"

"Would that I could, Harry, but I'm doing two shows this evening. A pity, since I cut an absolutely smashing figure in my Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest costume. It's the green tights that cause most of the sensation. Perhaps, if my adoring audiences don't demand too many encores, I'll pop in a bit after midnight."

"Midnight'll be too late." Harry shook his head. "I'll have to be out before that."

"Oh, so? Working against a deadline, are you?"

"I've found out that Fritz Zilver is due to meet Lily at the Black Chateau at midnight. He's arriving from Berlin late this evening."

"Fritz Zilver, the top secret agent Germany possesses?"

"That Fritz Zilver, yes," said Harry. "I'm betting he intends to buy the plans from Lily."

The Robin Hood costume was an impressive one and, after a helpful seamstress at the Majestic

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Theatre took it in in various places, it fit Harry pretty well. Wearing the borrowed costume and a domino mask, he arrived at the Black Chateau a few minutes after ten that evening.

The weather had turned foul again. While Harry climbed the black steps to the massive ebony door, lightning began to crackle in the pine woods looming behind the sprawling stone chateau. Thunder rumbled and echoed.

The butler who struggled with the big door was fat and flushed. He swayed on his feet and had trouble focussing on Harry's invitation card. "Can't be too careful, sir," he muttered, bringing the card up closer to his tiny eyes.

"Exactly. One wants to mingle only with one's own kind."

"Exactly. And you are most certainly one of the right sort, sir. May I be so bold as to compliment you on your tights."

"I'm flattered." Harry strode on into the ballroom.

No less than two hundred costumed guests filled the marble-floored room. There were pirates and kings, princesses and queens, three Cleopatras, a Joan of Arc, five Lucifers and an Eve. Lily Hope, looking quite handsome, was dressed as Salome, complete with an empty brazen tray under her arm. She was near the punchbowl, chatting with the young man who'd pretended to be contemplating suicide the previous evening.

Harry made his way to within earshot.

" ...can't be as inept as he seems, Lil," the young man, costumed as Wellington, was saying in an anxious whisper. "I mean to say, the bloke's snuck in here four times, including tonight, and he's bound to unearth the blooming plans sooner or — "

"Really, dear, do you honestly think a secret agent who crashes a masked ball dressed as the Wildman of Borneo presents a serious threat to us?"

"Yes, but just suppose he does happen to stumble on the hiding place before Zilver arrives with the payment for — "

"He's never come anywhere near the plans," she reminded him, with a musical laugh. "Sir Rowland isn't likely to guess that the dear old baron, all unaware, is keeping guard of the plans and the working model of the flying torpedo."

"That's all well and good, Lil, but we still have that interfering Henry Challenge to contend with. Thanks to your soft and sentimental side, he's still alive to — "

"His name is Harry Challenge," she corrected, looking away and seeing Harry now for

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the first time. "And what a delightful surprise; here he is now! Looking more handsome than ever. I find myself quite taken with your tights, Harry dear."

"So was the butler." He joined her, grinning. "Pleasant to see you again, Lily."

"Yes, our meetings are always so pleasant and nice. Excuse us, now, Philip darling." She took Harry's green-clad arm and led him toward a French door. "You probably overheard Philip chiding me for not allowing him to tie you up before inserting you in that filthy old sack, Harry." She looked up, sideways, into his eyes. "Perhaps he's right and I was indeed being a foolish and sentimental woman. I simply couldn't forget, you see, those wonderful nights in Tunisia."

"It was Algiers and you tried to disembowel me with a sacred scimitar."

"Did I? Well, I obviously couldn't bring myself to do you any serious harm, since you are still very much alive, and in possession of your bowels, I'll warrant." She tugged him, gently, out on to the terrace. "I often curse my fate, Harry, when I realize you and I always seem to be on opposite sides. Shall it always be thus, do you think?"

"Long as you continue to be a crook, yep."

"Oh, that's a harsh way to put it." Lightning flashed and her perfect teeth sparkled.

"There are more polite words, maybe." He glanced around the terrace, noting that they were alone out there in the night.

"I know it's difficult for you to understand why someone with my heaven-given voice must also dabble in intrigue, Harry dear," Lily said softly. "It's difficult to explain in — "

"Don't." He caught her wrist just as she was drawing a pearl handled derringer from beneath the tray.

"Harry, dear, there's no need to use force on...ow, you bastard!" The gun fell to the black stones of the terrace. As it hit, Lily tried to swing the tray up and whack Harry across the face with it.

He dodged, feinted with his left and then delivered a right jab square to her handsome chin.

Before she was completely stretched out, he was heading back inside.

The Klockburg railroad station was rich in its stained glass and wrought-iron. Standing on the morning platform, The Great Lorenzo was bathed in pale purple and yellow light while he tried to pass a stuffed picnic hamper to Harry.

"Lorenzo, I can get food on

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the train." Harry gestured at his nearby compartment. "The dining car on the Klokburg-Paris Express is noted across Europe for its culinary — "

"The portions are notoriously small," said the magician. "You'll require, even before you reach the border I'll wager, a ham, a half dozen hardboiled eggs, a tin of pate, choice hothouse grapes, a — "

"All right, fine. I'll take the damn thing."

Nodding, the magician passed the wicker hamper to him. "You certainly cleaned up this case in a jiffy, my boy."

"Didn't take too long, no."

"Now Kingsmill, chaperoned by the multifaceted Sir Rowland Fleetway, has his plans and his working model back and will soon have them all safely home in England. And they're all traveling on this selfsame crack train with you."

"Fleetway's decked out as a British nanny," mentioned Harry.

Tugging at his side whiskers, The Great Lorenzo said, "You haven't as yet explained, my lad, how you knew exactly where sweet Lily had hidden the plans and the model."

"That was mostly luck," admitted Harry. "I managed to overhear her say that Baron Waggenheim, unaware, was watching over the flying torpedo. Now, from what you and I had learned of the old fellow's habits, where was he likely to spend most of his time?"

The magician laughed, snapping his fingers. "Ah, but of course. In bed."

"Lily simply slipped the plans and the rest under his bed, fairly certain the stuff'd be safe under there until she needed it."

"Was he in the bed in question when you called last evening?"

"In it, but dozing. One of the young ladies was still awake, but I persuaded her to keep still."

The Great Lorenzo picked a bouquet of red roses out of the bright morning air. "Well, bon voyage. We'll meet again," he said. "That's not a mere platitude, but a prediction based on my latest vision. Take care, old friend."

"I'm going to look odd carrying these flowers around."

"They're to give to the young lady."

"What young lady?"

The platform-side door of Harry's compartment swung open and pretty, blonde Emma Kingsmill looked out. "Harry, you ought to be getting aboard, since the train will soon depart."

"That young lady," said the magician, bowing in her direction.

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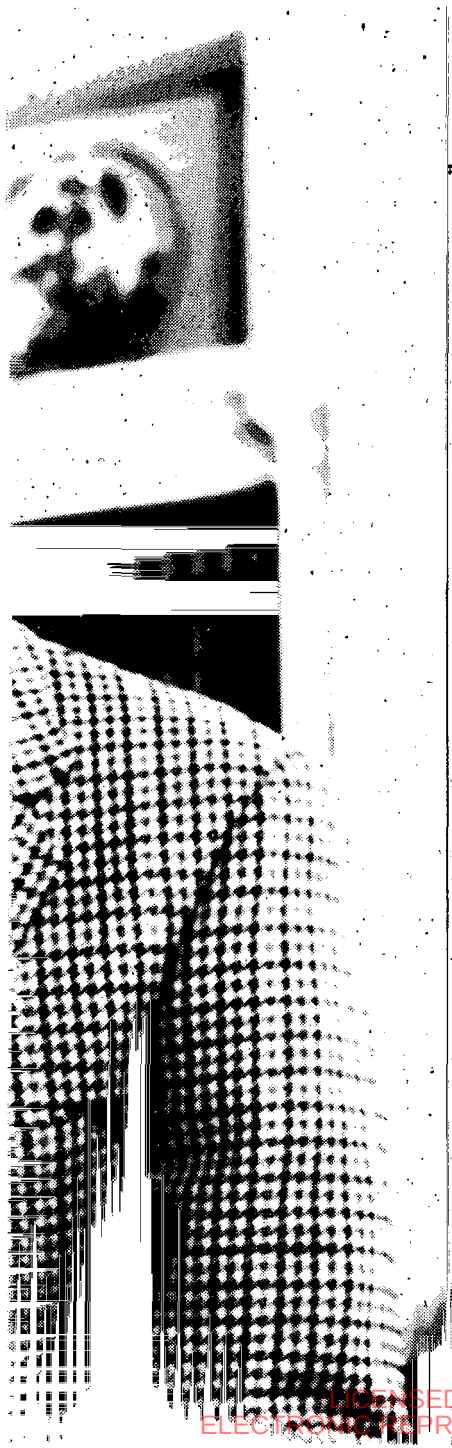

photo by Graham Finlayson

INTERVIEW: FREDERICK FORSYTH

With the publication of The Day of the Jackal in 1971, the name of its author, Frederick Forsyth, was catapulted overnight into the front ranks of thriller writers. Since then, Forsyth has written four other thrillers, each one a major best-seller.

All of Forsyth's books are distinguished by intricate plots and situations that seem so real, most readers assume that he has fictionalized real-life espionage cases. And even Forsyth's continued insistence that his plots are strictly the products of his own imagination has not ended the speculation about the real characters and situations that supposedly form the bases of his best-selling excursions into the murky worlds of espionage, terrorism, and military mercenaries.

The ultimate tribute to the Forsyth talent for making his plots seem real came after The Day of the Jackal, his novel about the hunt for a professional assassin hired to murder French President Charles deGaulle. No such assassin ever existed, but when the world's police forces some years ago tried to track down the

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notorious international terrorist Carlos Sanchez, the fugitive was dubbed "The Jackal." Likewise, Forsyth's The Odessa File, a thriller about the hunt for a Nazi war criminal, set off renewed public interest in the whole question of Nazi war criminals still in hiding.

Forsyth's latest novel, The Fourth Protocol, concerns a secret agreement between the Soviets and the West not to introduce miniature nuclear devices into each other's territory. It has become an international best-seller, and like the other Forsyth novels, has set off some speculation on just how much truth lies behind its intricate plot.

Recently, Forsyth sat down with Ernest Volkman, author of Warriors of the Night and other non-fiction works about the intelligence trade, in a wide-ranging conversation for ESPIONAGE on the thriller writer's craft — and how much of the real world of espionage finds its way into Forsyth's own work.

ESPIONAGE: It has been suggested that The Fourth Protocol is much closer to reality than your other novels. True?

FORSYTH: Well, I don't know. It's obviously the way it strikes you. It's always hard to talk percentages, in terms of what is true and what isn't true. Within one sentence, half of it is checkable with reality, and half will be something I threw on top, which is invented. Where I refer to something that actually happened, I check it out carefully. I can't really fudge those. For example, a character in The Fourth Protocol named John Preston has a background that includes an incident in Bogside (Belfast, Northern Ireland). I mention the incident, in which an undercover soldier came out of his car and, instead of dying, as was intended, he came out firing and killed two men stone dead. Now, that actually happened; it was in the newspapers. The guy who actually did that was almost certainly an SAS (British Special Forces) man, and was almost certainly in Hong Kong 24 hours later. I simply made him Preston. Now, there I am, in a sentence or a paragraph, blending a real incident with a fictional character. So there you have an instance of the combination of fact and fiction, and it would be very difficult to set any sort of percentage on it.

ESPIONAGE: But in the case of The Fourth Protocol, the British reviewers — or at least some of them — seem to suggest that the book is more political than anything else you've done; that you had some sort of political motive in mind.

FORSYTH: Yes, the British press obviously focussed much

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more on that aspect. In fact, there is a difference between the British and American editions of the book. The British version has two chapters that include memoranda by Philby (Kim Philby, Soviet KGB mole in the British MI6), these two memoranda purporting to be from Philby to the (Soviet Communist Party) General Secretary. The American editors here looked at me very plaintively and said, "Look, Freddy, dear, it's very interesting, but we're trying to interest readers in Oshkosh, Arkansas, in this book, and they don't really remember who Philby was or (British Prime Minister) Clement Atlee, and couldn't we just shorten this?" So I said okay, and I did a second version, just for the American edition. But in Britain, you see, some reviewers focussed on these two chapters, and said, "Aha, here's Forsyth, trying to make a political point!" I take the view — rightly or wrongly — that the bit about the British Labor Party isn't in there gratuitously, as a kind of nodule stuck on the end of the story. It's in there because it's an integral part of the story. There has got to be a justification of why the hell a habitually hyperconservative geriatric Russian leader would underwrite a very hazardous operation that could blow up in his face.

ESPIONAGE: But look, aren't you a victim of your own success? Your books are noted for strong actuality — the sense that what you're reading is labelled fiction but is so real it could also be non-fiction.

FORSYTH: Well, all right, but you can see the cost. I'm now accused, among other things, of trying to smear the Labor Party. What I'm trying to do is write fiction. It is important, in an artistic sense, to use the controversy of what has happened to that party as part of the plot. There are no other motives I have.

ESPIONAGE: Fair enough, but your book has red flags you wave. For example, you mention former Labor Prime Minister Hugh Gaitskell; you had to be aware that there is a great controversy over his death. Some say he was murdered by the KGB, using an untraceable poison of some sort.

FORSYTH: Yeah, well, that was a deliberate piece of mischieveousness, about a half-sentence's worth. You know, there have been all those vague rumors about how he died, whether there was some sort of vile toxin that killed him.

ESPIONAGE: What do you think?

FORSYTH: It's a strange case. Gaitskell, it is known, died of a then-untraceable viral

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toxin. Viral toxins do not grow inside you like cancers; they're ingested. They come from the outside: they're breathed in, sucked in, eaten in, drunk in — whatever, but they do come from the outside. And it was so rare that the medical science of his day couldn't identify it. Subsequently, they did identify it, and quite coincidentally, some time after that, a defector came over from the Soviet Union and said that the Russians had synthesized that bloody viral toxin about four years back, in powder form. Boom-boom.

ESPIONAGE: But the CIA was also developing such toxins, isn't that so?

FORSYTH: Yes, putting boot polish on Fidel Castro's shoe tops to make his beard drop out, or something. I mean, thank you very much.

ESPIONAGE: It has also struck a number of reviewers that you used a real person, Kim Philby, in the book. What was the reason for that?

FORSYTH: I reached a point early on where I needed a guy on whom the (Soviet) General Secretary could call as a kind of private advisor on matters British. And it came to my attention that there was some scuttlebutt to the effect that when (Yuri) Andropov was head of the KGB, he had in fact asked on a number of occasions for Philby's analysis of what way the British establishment would react to certain stimuli, how he thought the mass of the British people would respond in certain situations. Now, Andropov is dead and Philby is in retirement. I just simply felt like resuscitating him (Philby).

ESPIONAGE: But you understand, I think, that when you do that, it sets off all kinds of speculation about possible political motives.

FORSYTH: (Laughing). No, no. I plead innocent. I do not have a particular message. I am not, fundamentally, a political analyst. I'm not a member of any political party, nor have I ever been. If one is going to accept the theory that my book is a political treatise, it will have to be assumed that all these years I've been nurturing a deep grievance against the left wing of the Labor Party. Not true. Simply, I wrote a novel that uses as background some real-life political events.

ESPIONAGE: All right, then, let's assume you're innocent. Another charge that's been levelled against you, if I may use that term, is that you're not a man of your word. Supposedly, you retired after your last book...

FORSYTH: A whole canard.

ESPIONAGE: You mean those reports in the media to the effect that you had made all

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the money you needed, and didn't intend to write any more, were false?

FORSYTH: Not true. What happened was this: After I finished The Dogs of War, I was really bush tired. I'd done three novels under contract, with deadlines to meet; three big novels in 40 months. And when I was asked, "What's your next novel?" I replied that I hadn't got any plans. That got translated somehow into my retirement.

ESPIONAGE: How did you manage to get locked into such an incredible schedule? Three novels in 40 months?

FORSYTH: I'd been hawking The Day of the Jackal for weeks and months. When it was finally accepted, the editor, who must have had some gut feeling about it, didn't sign me to a contract for that one novel; he signed me to a contract for *three* novels. "Jackal" plus two, to be delivered by December 31, 1971, and December 31, 1972. Boom, boom! Well, I signed because I was hungry. I was a hungry writer. (Laughs). I needed the bread. And for a three-novel contract, I wasn't about to spit in his eye.

ESPIONAGE: In other words, you're not Bob Ludlum, who just keeps churning them out, even after he's been very successful?

FORSYTH: Well, he never stops writing. He's a machine.

ESPIONAGE: Do you get sick of writing?

FORSYTH: Well, I'm not compulsive. See, Len Deighton is a compulsive writer. If you told him, "You're never going to write another word," he'd curl up on the floor and die. Harry Patterson is the same. They're very compulsive. I'm not; if somebody said to me, "All right, that's it. Here's a project that's much more fascinating and more interesting than writing, would you want to take it on?" If I really wanted to, I would take it on. If it meant taking a project that was more interesting, more fascinating, more challenging, and more involving, and if it really absorbed me, I would take it on without qualm.

ESPIONAGE: Nevertheless, some reviewers seem to regard you as some kind of writing machine. For example, an especially nasty review in the New York Times — and I'm quoting now — said, "So there is Mr. Forsyth, in my mind's eye, at any rate, lolling about his Irish properties..." Do you loll about your properties, thinking up the next book idea, then rushing forth to the typewriter to churn it out?

FORSYTH: Good God, no! In the first place, I left Ireland in 1980. Secondly, the place I had there was a grand total of 25

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acres, hardly vast, rolling estates. And I didn't loll much, I assure you.

ESPIONAGE: Where do you live now?

FORSYTH: I went back to London in 1980. My wife, Carrie, is Irish, and we went on an extended vacation in Ireland in the fall of 1973. I loved the place, so we settled down very happily there. We did five years there; I enjoyed them enormously. And I think what happened was that in 1980, my 40th birthday had slipped past and I began to think, if I'm going to put down roots — I mean *root* roots — I'd better make up my mind. Both my boys had been born by then, but hadn't gotten to school-going age. So I thought about it, discussed it with Carrie, and eventually decided that where the roots were going to be was in my own country — England. And we decided to go home. There was nothing more to it than that. It was later suggested I'd been threatened by the IRA or something; absolute bull.

ESPIONAGE: Has the Exchequer expressed any gratitude for the fact that you've gone back to England?

FORSYTH: Oh, no. Our IRS, like yours, has neither humor nor gratitude.

ESPIONAGE: Wherever you're living, do you get approached often by people offering you "real" stories about espionage?

FORSYTH: Not too often. Letters do come to me suggesting that this person has a rather incredible story. When I have *occasionally* asked for other details, it turns out to be an extremely boring story and the deal is usually, within a few hours of a taped conversation, "I'll split fifty-fifty with you." My response is then, "Don't call me, I'll call you." You know the type: "I have a great story to tell, but I can't tell you unless we split fifty-fifty. It's about a dogface's experiences in Vietnam." Yes, well, thank you, but no. Occasionally, though, there's a nugget. I had one approach by a man who suggested a theme, based on the (Soviet KGB defector Yuri) Nosenko case and (former CIA counterintelligence chief James Jesus) Angleton. The trouble is, one is left with one great bloody question mark.

ESPIONAGE: You mean does he or doesn't he?

FORSYTH: We'll never know, I suspect.

ESPIONAGE: Judging by your books, and this little colloquy on the Nosenko case, you obviously know your way around the espionage area. That raises the question of whether you have ever been part of that world professionally, and if you now spend

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a good deal of time with people who work in that field.

FORSYTH: I don't really hobnob or spend many lunch hours with contacts. For my current book, I invoked some contacts and some past favors and asked if someone could introduce me to anyone in a position to tell me how the watchers (counterintelligence surveillance agents) work. Well, there was the usual bureaucratic tooth-sucking: "Well, my dear boy, ah yes. Have a word with Barney on this one." And, eventually a meeting. One negotiates, eventually, and one gets to a chap who was in it and is prepared to talk.

ESPIONAGE: Have you ever thought of doing non-fiction?

FORSYTH: I did one non-fiction book, way back in 1969. Then I got into "Jackal," and I haven't really turned my attention to non-fiction since. Non-fiction is a much tougher discipline. And you don't just get half of it right, you get the whole bloody lot right or they come down on you. I think, yes, if it were a subject that was really fascinating, what I felt was a matter of burning interest, then I would be very much interested in doing something. So far, I haven't found anything where I've said, "I don't care if it takes me a decade, I'm going to write the definitive story of what really happened here."

ESPIONAGE: Going back to the novels, why is it that the British seem to dominate the field of espionage thriller fiction?

FORSYTH: Probably because we virtually invented the who-done-it. It's a rather oblique and torturous business, and perhaps we're a rather bleak and torturous people. You see, it is a sort of secret society. We invented "the club," we invented the regiment and regimental reunions, regimental ties, and so on and so on. And it's cliquey. It has been since Elizabeth the First. I said at one point that the British bureaucracy may seem cumbersome for the Brits, but it's greased lightning compared to its counterparts in Europe and America. That's partly so because there are so many interpersonal relationships, people who went to school together, to university together, served in the same regiment together. Later, they've gone different ways, but they're still Harry and Joe. So Harry says to Joe, "We need an (espionage) operation like yesterday, can you set it up? Paperwork will follow." Try that in the French bureaucracy. My dear, you'd be there for a year!

ESPIONAGE: But surely it takes more than that sociological setup to set off the

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creative juices. What I'm driving at is how your ideas germinate. What sets off the spark?

FORSYTH: That's difficult to say. It can be something I've read in the newspaper, or a TV documentary, or a magazine article, or simply a personal conversation with someone. That will usually start some kind of germ working away in there. If you look at all that I've written, the whole theme can usually be summed up in one single question: what if? What if the OAS (Organization Armee Secrete, a French right-wing terrorist organization) had hired a contract killer from outside France to shoot Charles deGaulle? What if a young German reporter from the postwar generation decided to hunt down a missing Nazi butcher? What if a mining tycoon decided to knock off the government of a West African republic in order to obtain its mineral rights?

ESPIONAGE: What do you think of the movie treatments of your books?

FORSYTH: I didn't think that The Odessa File was quite as good as Day of the Jackal. I thought some of the tension was lost. The menace that these people seem to exude, which was captured so brilliantly in The Third Man, was not there. And, you know, The Third Man achieved that menace without violence; no violence at all. You couldn't get Carol Reed to put any violence up on the screen, but my God, he scared the shit out of you with that music and those lights.

ESPIONAGE: Mr. Graham Greene once said that The Third Man was the only movie of his work that he was satisfied with, although possibly a major reason for that feeling was that he wrote the screenplay himself. Have you ever considered the idea?

FORSYTH: Well, I've thought about it, like I think of jogging. It's a nice idea, but it passes. I lie down and the feeling wears off.

ESPIONAGE: That eliminates the screenplay idea. Do you have plans to do anything else? Another book, perhaps?

FORSYTH: No, I don't have an idea germinating at the moment. I have to confess I don't. But I hope to start again soon, to start thinking positively about another project.

ESPIONAGE: Presumably, then, you are not lolling about.

FORSYTH: No, I'm not lolling. I very seldom loll. What I want to do is write. Nobody has ever pressured me to do so; it's what I want to do.

Rest assured, I'll write something; I just don't know what it is yet.

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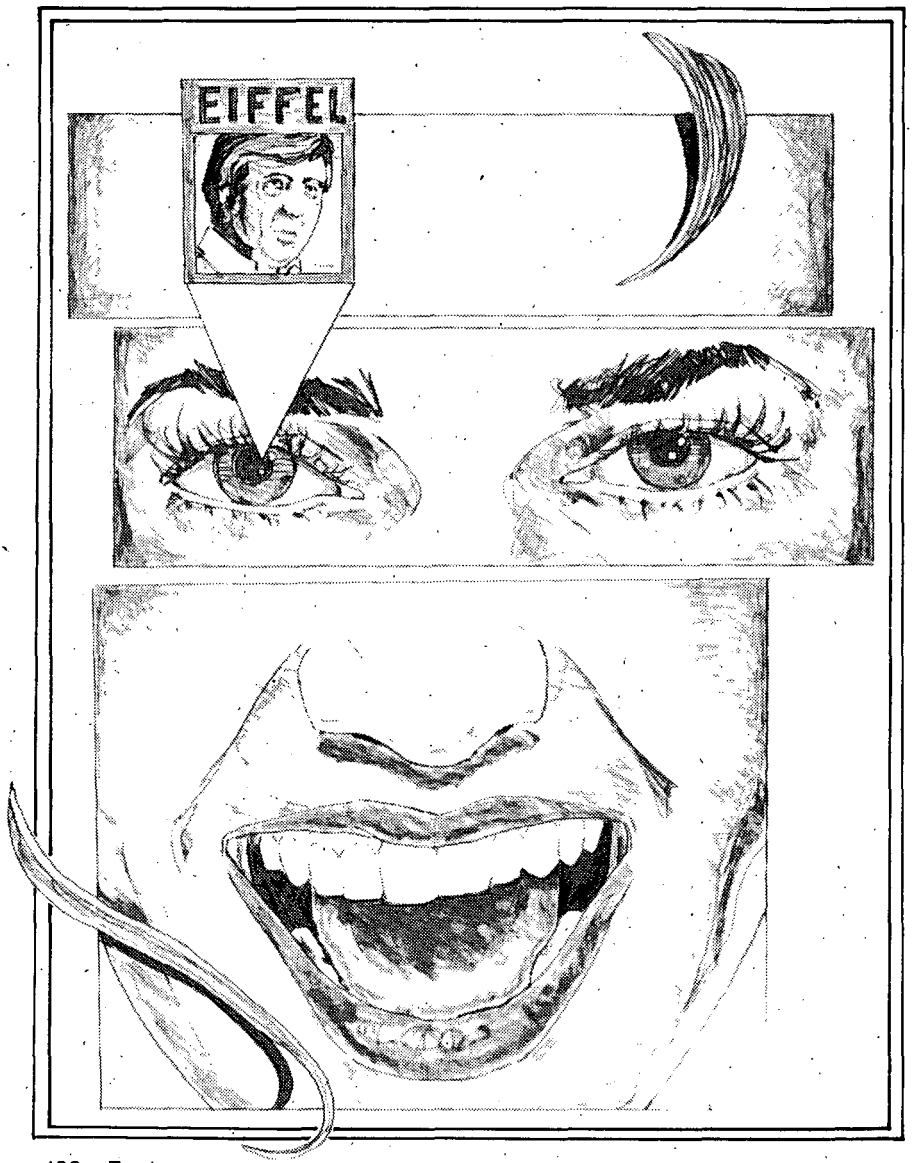

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COVER STORY

by Edward D. Hoch

Eiffle, France's largest weekly newsmagazine, generally went to press on Saturday night or early Sunday morning, so it could be shipped throughout the country and much of western Europe in time to greet the public at newsstands early on Monday morning. Simone Brosse's final job each week was to check the color proofs of the cover, which was printed first on Saturday afternoon. Then she was free until Tuesday morning, when the whole thing started again.

She liked her job, but mostly she liked her weekends, when Eric flew over from London to be with her. After six months with Eric Church, she knew she loved him, though she was not yet certain of his feelings toward her. As usual on Saturday at noon, he met her for lunch at the little cafe on the *Rue Monge*, just a block from her office. "How was your flight?" she asked, kissing him.

He smiled at her. "Fine. You must fly over to London some weekend, before the weather turns bad." In his work, he did something with computers. His time always seemed to be his own and she envied him his freedom.

They ordered lunch at one of the outdoor tables, enjoying one of September's last warm weekends. "I'll have to get right back," she told him. "The cover proofs are due in at two o'clock."

"Who's on it next week?"

"The West German Chancellor. It's a good photo of him."

Eric sipped his drink. "You

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know, I'd like one of those for the wall of my apartment. I don't think I ever told you but I've got framed portraits of all the European leaders."

"Whatever for?"

He shrugged. "Just decoration. Bring me one of the proofs tonight, will you?"

"You can have the whole magazine on Monday morning."

"I have to catch the last flight back tomorrow night."

"You didn't tell me."

"Sorry. There's a meeting Monday morning that I have to attend. We'll make up for it next time."

Simone was unhappy at the news but she tried to hide it during lunch. After all, they still had Saturday night and most of Sunday together. As they parted after lunch, she smiled, and said, "I'll see you at the apartment tonight."

"Six o'clock."

The subject of each week's cover remained a well-kept secret until the presses rolled on Saturday evening, because there always existed the possibility that some late-breaking news event might force a change. Ordinarily, the color proof remained locked in Simone's desk over the weekend, until the issue was printed. But she saw no harm in giving one to Eric. She trimmed it and placed it in her briefcase, careful that it wouldn't be scratched.

Eric had a key to her apartment, and he was waiting there for her. After six months, it was their Saturday evening custom. Sometimes they would go out to eat, while other times they would stay in and make love, settling later for whatever she happened to have in the refrigerator.

This night, he kissed her as she entered, just after six, and asked, "Did you remember my cover?"

"Of course. Here it is."

He took it and nodded appreciatively. "That'll look good on my wall. Let me run down to the car with it right now so I don't forget it."

"Did you rent a car for such a short time?"

"I thought we might take a drive in the country tomorrow, before my plane leaves." He headed for the door with the cover proof. "Be right back."

He was gone only a few moments, and Simone busied herself with dinner preparations. Anticipating an evening in, she'd stopped at a bakery for a loaf of bread and some dessert. But when Eric returned, he was relaxed and seemed eager to please her. "Let's go out tonight. We can come back here later. We'll go to *Marcelle's*."

"That's so expensive, Eric!"

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"It's on me, tonight. Business has been good."

They dined in something approaching splendor, and Eric even left an outrageously large tip for the waiter. "I'm so stuffed, I think I should go home to bed," Simone decided, as they walked in the moonlight along the Seine.

"An excellent suggestion," Eric agreed.

They spent Sunday in the country as planned, and picnicked near the Marne River. It was a pleasant day that Simone was sorry to see end. When Eric took her home on his way to the airport, she kissed him and said, "Remember your cover proof. You know, I'll have to see your apartment sometime."

"I wish you'd come over soon. There are so many things in London to show you."

"I'll think about it. See you on Saturday?"

"Of course!"

She watched him drive away and then went up to her apartment. It was always a lonely time when he left; she switched on the television just to fill the place with the sound of voices. But it was the news; all dull politics: Marcel Allier, France's popular ex-president, had issued a statement through his press secretary denouncing the right wing and calling for closer ties with the Soviet Union. There had been great surprise at the statement, coming on the eve of an important conference about the new American missiles due to be deployed in Europe.

She listened for a few minutes and then turned to another channel. Politics had always bored her. Even at *Eiffel*, she was more interested in the back-of-the-book leisure and arts features than in the up-front politics and diplomacy.

Some weeks, when Eric stayed over and flew back on Monday night, her day off was a treat. But this Monday, her spirits were as dark as the clouds that gathered above the city. The morning news was still full of politics, reporting the opening of the missile conference with the Americans and repercussions from Marcel Allier's surprise statement of the previous day. The press had been trying to reach him for a follow-up comment but he was declining interviews. His press secretary, a fusty little man named Pierre Neige, came on camera to assure the press that Allier had nothing more to say.

Simone tried switching channels, but this time she got a reporter interviewing a middle-of-the-road French politician about the effects of Allier's statement. "It could sway some undecided ministers," he admitted. "Allier is highly re-

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garded by us all."

She gave up and snapped off the set.

Later, doing her weekly grocery shopping, she saw the familiar cover of *Eiffel* on the newsstand. The sight of it used to fill her with a sense of pride and accomplishment each week, but now she was a bit more blase. Spotting it, she passed it by with hardly a moment's interest.

After lunch, she telephoned Emmy Landes, a friend who worked nights as an exotic dancer at the *Crazy Horse Saloon*. During her early days with *Eiffel*, Simone had done a few feature assignments and had met Emmy when she interviewed the twenty girls who worked there. The owner had given them all names as exotic as their dances, and most were reluctant to have their real names appear in print. But Emmy had been quite open about her identity, and the two of them had become good friends. Emmy was the only one with whom she ever spoke about Eric. That day, they met for an afternoon movie and then a quick dinner at an inexpensive cafe nearby. Simone told her about Eric's visit, and Emmy said, "You really love him, don't you?"

"I suppose so. Does it show that much?"

Emmy grinned. "Remember last year when I had that actor? I was the same way. I know the feeling. Look, you should fly over to London and see him. Maybe you should move there. He won't keep coming here forever."

"Sometimes I wonder why he comes here as much as he does," Simone admitted.

They parted after dinner and Simone returned to her apartment alone. It wasn't until late evening that she thought to turn on the TV news, and by that time she had missed the first ten minutes of the program. It had been devoted to a fast-breaking story: the ex-president, Marcel Allier, had been kidnapped by rightest terrorists, apparently enraged by his statement of the previous day. The burned-out wreckage of his limousine had been found on a country road near his home, along with the burned bodies of his bodyguard and chauffeur.

Simone watched in mounting horror. She saw film clips of Allier from his last public appearance a week earlier, and there were shots of his press secretary fielding questions outside the police station, of his estranged wife who lived in Switzerland, and of his large country estate. Then the newsman switched to one of their correspondents, who reported that a group calling

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itself the *Rightest Coalition Against Communism* was claiming responsibility for the kidnapping, and promising a message from Allier on the following morning.

Simone went to bed thinking that the world was becoming a cruel and complicated place. She was restless, but she had to sleep. She knew the *Eiffel* office would be a madhouse in the morning, as it always was with an important breaking story. She wasn't disappointed. Otto Speres, editor of the national news section, was bustling about the place as if World War III had begun.

"What's happening?" she asked him, taking her place at the production desk.

"You heard about Allier? There's a message now from his kidnappers. It was delivered to the police, the Senate, the National Assembly, the daily paper, the television station, and the news magazines."

"They didn't miss much," Simone said, as she joined the others crowding around the desk for a glimpse of the message. It was a single typewritten sheet, run off on a copier, with Allier's shaky signature at the bottom. In it, he denounced his Sunday statement, admitting he'd been wrong, and called for full cooperation with the right wing. It was so obviously a

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document signed under duress that Simone wondered what the kidnappers hoped to accomplish. Accompanying the letter was an instant photo of Allier, handcuffed, smiling weakly at the camera. From one side of the picture, a gloved hand was holding a copy of this week's *Eiffel* against his chest.

"Look at that!" Speres marveled. "They dated the photo with our magazine!"

"Is that good publicity or bad?" someone asked.

While they discussed it, Simone wandered back to her desk and started opening the mail that had accumulated over the weekend. *How odd,* she thought. *The photograph obviously must have been taken yesterday, following Allier's kidnapping, so why was it necessary to date it at all?*

It was interesting that they had used *Eiffel,* though, and she suddenly remembered it was the very same cover she'd given to Eric for his wall. It might be fun to call London and tell him about it. Her job involved occasional calls to London, and she'd phoned him once before from her desk. She picked up the phone and dialed the London area code, followed by his company number.

But the girl at the switchboard told her that Eric was on vacation this week. That hardly seemed possible, and it bothered her. She hung up and sat staring at the phone. On vacation? Why hadn't he told her? Why had he said he must fly back for a Monday meeting?

There were a dozen explanations, of course. Perhaps he was searching for another job and had a Monday interview. He might not have wanted to tell her until the job was his. Maybe he was planning to surprise her and take a job in Paris! He'd mentioned it once as a possibility...

"Simone?"

The sound of her name brought her back to the present. Otto Speres was leaning over her desk, holding the photograph of Marcel Allier. "What is it, Mr. Speres?"

"Simone, they're wondering if we have any way of identifying the city or region where this copy of *Eiffel* was sold. I know it's a long shot, but sometimes large stores stamp their name or a code number on the cover. Could you go over this with a magnifier and see if there's any marking?"

"Of course." She took the print and got out a powerful glass she used to examine printing proofs. A quick scan of the familiar cover told her there were no special markings on it. The kidnappers were not fools, after all. They'd hardly use a cover that —

Her glass had wandered near

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the edge of the cover, next to the gloved hand that held it. The camera's flash had reflected on something there. It looked, through the glass, like a tiny rectangle of plastic tape. The magazine had been damaged and a tear had been repaired.

But it was a new issue, only just gone on sale. And why bother to repair it anyway?

She moved the glass along the print and studied the top corner of the *Eiffel* cover. Though it hadn't caught the light's reflection in the same way, she thought she could make out a piece of clear plastic tape there, as well.

It was almost as if their cover had been taped onto something else; another magazine, or some earlier issue.

She got up and walked the length of the office to the water cooler. What was she thinking? What was this insane thought trying to invade her mind?

She took an early lunch hour and walked through the crowded streets near her office. The afternoon editions of the papers were already out, featuring the photo of Allier on the front page. In the newspaper reproduction, it was impossible to see the little pieces of tape.

She ate alone at a cafe near the office, then hurried back to her desk. Clutching the photo in her hand, she went in to see Otto Speres. "Mr. Speres, about this photograph you asked me to examine —"

"Yes, Simone? Did you find something?"

"No. No, there were no markings or names on the cover."

"I didn't expect there would be. Thank you anyway."

She left it on his desk and returned to her own department.

They'd thought she'd be a feature writer, at first, but the production aspects of getting out the magazine had always interested her more. She thrived on deadlines and typography, on catching little printers' errors and correcting them.

She knew what she had seen through that magnifier.

For the rest of the afternoon, she tried to busy herself with Tuesday's routine tasks, filing last week's proofs and clearing the deck for a new issue, but the memory of that picture kept intruding with its bothersome quesions.

Simone left work at the usual time, hurrying out of the building on the Boulevard St. Germain and heading for her nearby Metro stop. She descended with the usual rush hour crowd and stood waiting on the platform for the train that would carry her the two stops to her apartment. In midsummer, when the days were

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long and balmy, she'd been known to walk the distance. Tonight, there were too many things on her mind.

As the train approached, she felt a sudden jostling behind her. Then there was an actual shove against the small of her back and she felt herself plunging forward, onto the tracks.

"Are you all right?" the man asked, when she was once again on firm ground, feeling the platform beneath her.

"I...I think so."

"Some damn fool came barreling through the crowd and actually pushed against you! I couldn't believe I was seeing it happen. Luckily, I grabbed a handful of your dress as you went off the platform and yanked you back out of the way."

"I guess I owe you my life. Did you see who pushed me?"

The man, a slender young American tourist, glanced around at the sea of faces. Many had stayed to help, but others had pushed onto the Metro train to be on their way. Several volunteered the information that her assailant had run up the steps to the street. "He ran away," her rescuer confirmed. "I suppose he panicked when he saw what he'd done."

Simone took the next train and got off at her usual stop. She'd assured everyone she was all right, but when she reached the street she was still trembling. All the way down the block to her apartment, she resisted the urge to turn around, to see if she was being followed. There was no doubt in her mind that the shove on the Metro platform had been deliberate. Someone had tried to kill her.

She opened the door to her apartment and stepped inside. Eric was standing in the center of the room, waiting for her.

The surprise was something like an icy chill. There was no surge of elation, only a momentary sense of panic. "What are you doing here?"

He smiled at her confusion. "You gave me a key — remember?"

"I mean, what are you doing here on a Tuesday? Why aren't you in London?"

"I decided to take the week off. I missed not having yesterday with you."

She moved to the other side of the room, staying carefully out of reach. "I knew you were on vacation. I tried phoning you today."

"Oh? What about?"

"Allier's been kidnapped by rightist terrorists. You might have heard about it."

"Yes, I did. Simone, what's the matter with you? Every

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time I start toward you, you move away."

She walked to the televison set and snapped it on. "I'm just nervous, I guess. I was almost killed on the way home." She told him about being pushed in front of the train.

"My God, it couldn't have been deliberate!"

"I don't know. Maybe it was." The TV was showing a weather report, the sound droning on at a barely audible level. "Eric, there's something we have to talk about."

"What's that?"

"The cover proof I gave you. What did you do with it?"

"Do? I took it back to London, of course; to my apartment." He started to move toward her again, a bit too casually. "Simone, what *is* the matter with you?"

"The terrorists took an instant photo of Allier, with this week's cover of *Eiffel* in the picture to date it. Under a magnifying glass, it looks as if the cover was held on by two pieces of plastic tape."

"What do you mean?"

"They wanted everyone to think the picture was taken yesterday. But if that cover could have been faked somehow, the picture might have been taken on Sunday, or even on Saturday night."

"But why?"

"You tell me, Eric. That cover in the picture — was it the advance proof that I gave you on Saturday for your apartment?"

"Simone, that's crazy! What sort of person do you think I am?"

"I'm sorry. It's just too big of a coincidence! You asked for the cover proof on Saturday and a faked cover of some sort is used on Monday. And you take a week's vacation without telling me."

"I'm telling you now! And why does that cover have to be the one you gave me?"

"If it was a real cover from a real issue, why tape it on? What would be the point? It was taped onto an old copy, because the new copy wasn't out yet." She took a deep breath and added, "They tried to kill me today, didn't they? Because I might figure it out. And when they failed at the Metro station, they sent you here."

"Simone — "

Suddenly, the television screen was showing the face of Marcel Allier. She hurried to it and turned up the sound. "...found murdered in the trunk of a car in the *Parc Monceau* this afternoon, only a day after his kidnapping by rightist terrorists. Government officials were outraged by the killing of former President Allier and demanded — "

Eric lunged at her then, but

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as she twisted out of his reach and ran for the door, she yanked a cane-backed chair across his path. She heard him topple over it, cursing, as she ran down the steps.

Then she was on the street, running, and she heard Eric shout from the window: "Georges! She's getting away!"

A man came out of a car on her left, slamming the door as he ran in pursuit. Though she'd never seen him before, somehow she sensed he was the one from the Metro station. He was to be her executioner. She dodged down an alley, running blindly now, hoping to find a policeman or someone to protect her. But no one looked twice at her running figure. They were accustomed to runners and joggers exercising after work.

Finally, she paused, out of breath, to lean against the brick wall of a building many blocks from her apartment. She thought she had lost him, but she could take no chances. She knew now she had to get to the police with her story, but there were risks even in that. They would not hesitate to kill her now, with Allier dead. She had the information that could ruin their entire scheme, if only she could piece it together the right way.

She needed time to think, to sort out the facts. Then she could tell her story in a way that made sense. She glanced at a street sign and was relieved that she was only a block away from the *Crazy Horse*, where Emmy worked. Emmy would be there now, preparing for the evening show.

Simone hurried along the street, finally stopping at the corner opposite the stage door of the Crazy Horse. She'd come here once before, to meet her friend after a performance, and she knew the way in. But as she crossed the street, a car turned the corner a block away. The driver spotted her and increased his speed. It was Eric, with the other man, prowling the streets in search of her. She was certain they saw her enter the building, but she had no choice.

Backstage before showtime, everything was bedlam. Half-naked dancers were busy with the straps and sequins that passed for costumes at the Crazy Horse. At last she located Emmy in the main dressing room, applying stage makeup to her eyes and lips. "Simone!" she gasped. "What are you doing here?"

"Eric...Eric is trying to kill me! He and another man are chasing me."

"I can't believe it!"

"I know something — about the killing of Marcel Allier."

"Simone, you must go to the

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police."

"I can't. They're outside now. They might follow me in here."

"Take off your clothes," Emmy joked. "They'll never recognize you."

"It's nothing to laugh about, Emmy."

"All right." She went to the closet and pulled out a costume that was mostly beads. "Put this on. And this wig."

Simone felt foolish in the costume, but almost at once there was a commotion in the corridor. The man named Georges poked his head in the door. "Police! We're searching for a dark-haired girl who ran in here."

"Evette is dark-haired," Emmy told him. "Try the next dressing room."

When he was gone, Simone sighed with relief. "Eric would have recognized me. I have to get out of here."

"Maybe he's really from the police."

Simone considered that. "No. He's the man who tried to kill me in the Metro."

"The Metro! What have you been up to, today?"

"It's a long story. Is there a telephone here?"

"Outside, in the hallway."

Simone glanced out through the partly opened door. Some of the girls were hurrying on stage for the opening number, and the lights had been dimmed. She reached the telephone and unhooked the receiver, waiting for a dial tone. Then she realized it was a pay telephone and her money was back in the dressing room. She dialed the operator and waited until she heard a voice.

"Operator, I want the police — "

A hand came down gently on the hook, breaking the connection. It was Eric's. "Did you think I wouldn't recognize you in that getup, after all the months we've been together?"

She was trembling now, looking for a way out. "What do you want, Eric?"

The music swelled from the stage and the lights came up. The nearly nude dancers went into their routine as a checkerboard of light played over them. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry it has to end this way."

Something bright glistened in the reflected light from the stage. She tried to scream but his hand was over her mouth. Then as his other hand moved with the knife, Emmy Landes was suddenly behind him, pulling at his neck. "Let her go!" she screamed. "Let her go this minute!"

He released his grip for just an instant and Simone broke free. Then she saw the other man, Georges, coming around the backdrop. Even in the dim backstage light, she could see

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the pistol in his hand, with an awkward-looking silencer attached to its barrel. He raised it to fire and she dropped to the floor as the gun coughed, its low sound all but smothered by the music onstage.

Then Eric was on top of her, crushing the breath from her body, and for an instant she felt the sharp stab of his knife in her shoulder. Then he rolled off, beside her on the dusty wooden floor, and lay still.

"Simone!" Emmy cried out. "Are you all right?"

"My shoulder — "

"She's bleeding!"

Simone was vaguely aware that Eric was dead, and that the police arrived. Then she passed out.

It was morning when she awakened in the hospital bed, and a man in white was smiling at her. "You're going to be fine," he assured her. "The wound in your shoulder isn't deep. I'd say you're a very lucky lady."

"Eric — "

"There are several people waiting to see you. If you feel up to it after breakfast, I'll let them tell you about it."

A police inspector and some government officials were the first ones let into her room, but when she heard that *Eiffel*'s Otto Speres was outside, she demanded that he be allowed in, too. "I won't tell you a thing unless he's here," she insisted.

When Speres entered, it was good to see a familiar face. "How are you feeling, Simone?" he asked.

"All right, Mr. Speres." She glanced around at the others who circled the bed. There were police and government officials, and she recognized Allier's press secretary, Pierre Neige, from his television appearances.

"Could you tell us what happened, from the beginning?" the police inspector asked.

"The beginning." Simone thought about it. "I suppose it really began the day I met Eric. Is he dead?"

"Yes," the inspector told her. "And Georges is in custody. It was Georges who killed him accidentally, when he fired at you. Eric stabbed you as he fell, but he was already dying."

"I'll never know if it was all arranged from the beginning or if the scheme came about because of his friendship with me." She told them about his asking for a proof of the *Eiffel* cover, and what happened after that. "You see, once I suspected that the cover proof had been used in the photograph of Allier, I knew the picture had been taken Monday. By Monday, *Eiffel* was for sale on every newsstand in the country."

"But what did they hope to

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accomplish?" Speres asked, drawing a glare from the inspector conducting the questioning.

"I thought about that a long time," Simone admitted. "What was the difference if Allier was kidnapped on Sunday or Monday? And then I remembered the statement he'd issued on Sunday, denouncing the right wing and calling for closer ties with the Soviets. It was enough to sway some undecided votes at the missile conference this week. But suppose Allier never said that. Suppose he was kidnapped not by *the right* but by *the left*, and that Sunday's statement was a fake. His chauffeur and bodyguard were killed on Sunday, then burned with the car on Monday to conceal the real time of death. Marcel Allier, himself, was probably held prisoner till Monday before he was killed, so the autopsy would reveal the proper time of death. Of course, his supposed Monday statement, and his murder, only strengthened feeling against the right wing. The vote and the missile conference this week are certain to go the way the Soviets want."

It was Allier's press secretary who spoke up. "But this is impossible! I issued Allier's statement on Sunday. To say it was a fake is to say that I was in league with the kidnappers!"

"Exactly," Simone agreed from her bed. "Allier had to be killed before he could denounce both the statement and you."

Neige threw himself at her, ignoring the hands of the others that reached out to grab him. There was a renewed burst of pain in her wounded shoulder as she fought with him momentarily, then he was pulled to the floor and handcuffed by the inspector.

"You are a brave young woman," Otto Speres told her later. "Allier is dead, but you have single-handedly brought his killers to justice and defeated a Soviet plot of international scope."

"It didn't seem all that world-shaking while it was happening," she said, staring out the window at the trees in the park. "It only seemed that I was losing a man I thought I loved."

"Can you write it up in your own words for *Eiffel*?" he asked.

"I suppose so. I did start out to be a feature writer."

"Good! Unless there's a war, I'm putting you on next week's cover!"

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THE MAGIC SEARCH

by Preston Pairo III

Twelve hours before, Harry Colmus had been pressed against the naked body of a large-breasted girl, who had a brickhouse body, the innocent face of a fourteen-year-old, and the sexual hunger of a nymphomaniac.

Then, as though it had eyes, the phone rang.

He answered it somewhere around the twenty-third jingle, and was immediately sorry. If he hadn't answered the damned phone, he would still have been in the Caribbean, on a cake assignment, getting tanned and laid in the name of national security, keeping an occasional eye out for any KGB hotshots who had it in for him.

As it was, he was back in the States, having been borne north on the first-available commercial flight to National Airport, and routed urgently into a government limousine bound for Langley, Virginia, and the home office of the CIA — his employers.

"You don't look well, Harry," the driver commented, eying his lone passenger, who was shivering in the back seat despite the heavy topcoat the Company had supplied.

"I'm freezing," Harry griped.

"Harry, be a sport; it's springtime. The temperature will probably hit 50 today; it'll help bring out the cherry blossoms."

"To hell with the cherry blossoms. I'm allergic to the

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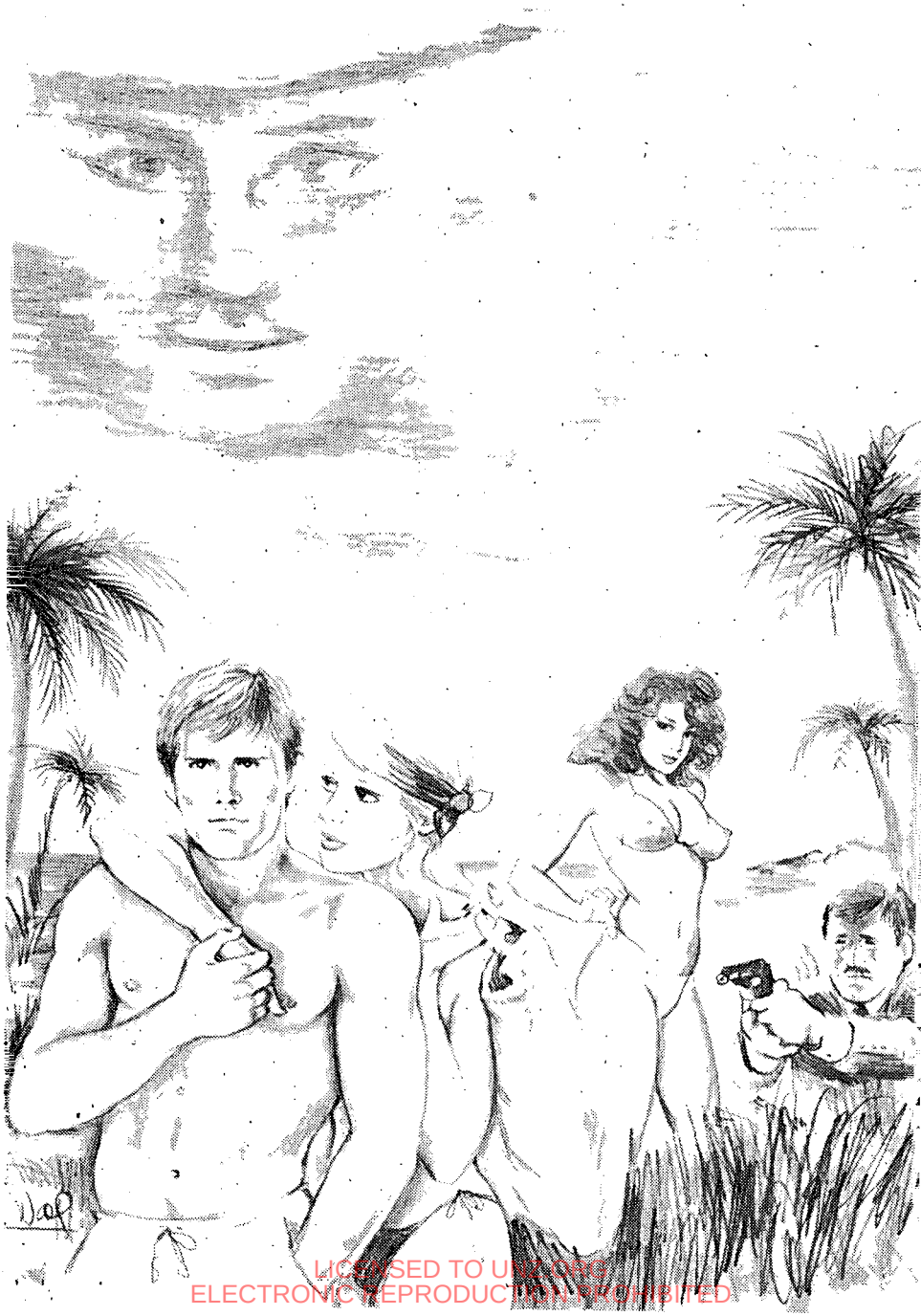

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cold; that's why all my assignments are near the Equator. My contract gives me first option when we open an office on the Sun."

"Dear Harry," the driver quipped, "still the same. I'd have thought five years of spying would have changed you, but you've still got the hots for the Third World."

"Palm trees beat cherry blossoms every day. What am I doing up here, anyway? They used to send messages. I liked that better than being delivered to the Arctic Circle."

"Big problems, Harry. Something went down yesterday — very big. Big-big."

"Hell, that can't be what I'm here for; I'm special agent in charge of diddly-squat."

"I think they're kicking you up to the major leagues."

"Thrills," Harry moped. "I should've opened a bait shop."

Harry wasn't used to important meetings in intelligence circles, so he caught a few suspicious eyes when he walked into the expensively-decorated meeting room dressed in an Hawaiian-print, short sleeved shirt and scruffy jeans. The row of shark's teeth hanging around his neck didn't help, either, since everyone else had on Brooks Brothers' suits and striped ties, whose patterns signified membership in this club or that.

There were five others in the room, only two of whom he recognized. All of them were older than Harry by at least fifteen years, and they all looked far too stern for anyone's welfare, particularly Harry's.

"Sit down, Harry — you're late," Gordon Khumchak said, pointing to the only remaining empty chair that circled his desk, one from the left. "Let me introduce you; everyone else knows one another by now." Khumchak started at Harry's right: "Derrick Nielson, British Intelligence," and moved on to Harry's left; "Leonard Filty, British Intelligence, Harrin Bojouis, CIA, France, and Phillip Stegman, CIA, Peking."

"Bok Choy," Harry smiled at Stegman, with whom he'd shared some strange wine and stranger women in the Far East a few years back. Stegman, who understood the private reference, contained his urge to smile. Harry promptly forgot everyone else's name — he was terrible with names — except for Khumchak, because Gordon was his higher-up, a very higher-higher-up, with whom Harry rarely had the need to speak.

"Harry," Khumchak began, leaning back in his chair dramatically, "we have somewhat of a problem here. We've

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lost someone rather important, a scientist by the name of Ronald Burch. He was working in England, synchronizing a new range of defense missiles."

Harry had no idea what that meant.

"Burch, and only Burch, knows the codes to fire those missiles, because he invented them and programmed the ranges. Yesterday, Burch disappeared. At first, we thought he'd defected, but then Agent Nielson was tipped that Burch had been kidnapped; we didn't know by whom."

"Nice work, Nellie," Harry whispered.

"Then Agent Bojouis, who'd been alerted about Burch's disappearance, picked up his trail in the south of France. He followed him until he lost Burch near . . . where was it, Harrin?"

"Arcachon," Bojouis pronounced, and the word flowed off his tongue like the oil that had lain between the native girl's breasts.

"From Arcachon," Khumchak continued, butchering the word like chopped sirloin, "we've picked up a scattered trail west."

Uh-oh, Harry thought; *this is getting a little too close to my neck of the woods. Oh well, there's still the Atlantic Ocean to cross . . .*

"Then we got word he was in Haiti."

So much for the ocean.

"Once he hit Haiti, we lost him."

Hell, Harry thought, *I'm about to get dumped on.*

"Our problem, really," Khumchak rambled on, as Harry grimaced, "is that without the slightest clue, we're pretty well stumped. And, frankly, we don't have time to dig. The Soviets must know that Burch has the codes, so we can assume they'll try anything to make him talk."

"Change the codes," Harry suggested.

"Harry, I wish we could, but Burch is the only person with the know-how to get into those computers. Without him, it will take months, maybe even a year, to figure out the basis for his programming. The problem is not that the Soviets will fire the missiles — we've already disarmed them; the problem is the time delay."

"You realize there are hundreds of islands in the Caribbean, and even more uncharted, uninhabited ones? Finding Burch without any tips is the old needle-in-the-haystack times one million."

"We realize that," Khumchak admitted, "which is why we have hired you some help."

"Help?" Harry asked, doubtfully. "The entire U.S. Marine Corps, perhaps?"

"No," Khumchak replied, pulling a thin file from his desk

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drawer, "just one man. An old friend of yours, I understand. *The Mystic*, Kagen Elstob."

"That dime-store magician! You hired *him* for help? You're crazy! No wonder the taxpayers hate the CIA."

"Harry, Harry," a calm voice soothed. Harry spun around to find Elstob standing in the center of the room. As usual, Harry hadn't seen him enter — nor, for that matter, had anyone else.

"Go away, you no-talent rat! I told you the last time I saw you, in St. Croix, that if I ever saw you again, I'd kill you."

"You still haven't gotten over her, have you?"

Harry leaned onto Khumchak's desk. "I will not work with this — " Harry turned to point an accusing finger, but Elstob was gone. "Creep. He's doing it again," Harry sighed.

"The man has powers," Khumchak said.

"Baloney! I wouldn't hire him for a kiddie birthday party."

"Leonard," Harry's boss said, "why don't you fix Harry a drink while we give him the information we have."

"Mr. Colmus, what is your pleasure?" the dignified man asked.

"Rum, straight, preferably 151-proof, no glass, just the bottle — full!" Harry slumped into his chair, eying his fellow agents. "Anyone here have some dope?"

It's bad enough they put Elstob on a case with me, Harry thought, *but to fly us to San Juan on the same scheduled flight — in adjacent seats? That stinks!"*

Elstob, however, seemed oblivious, or at least unconcerned, with Harry's obvious distaste for him, and tried to hold a civil conversation as the DC-10 leveled off at 31,000 feet.

"So how've you been, Harry?"

"Duckie," Harry answered, sarcastically, looking through the small window next to his first-class seat and wishing he had a parachute.

"I'm looking forward to some warm weather for a change."

"Oh?"

"I live in Tibet now. It snows most of the year — quite beautiful and very stimulating to the mind."

"Uh-huh." Elstob had always had a yearning for the Orient, Harry remembered. Probably inbred, from what Harry recollected about Elstob's history. Kagen had been born to an American woman and a Japanese man just before World War II. Pearl Harbor found his family under suspicion, and rather than spending time in a stateside concentration camp, Kagen's father took his wife and child to Japan. His father

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enlisted in the Japanese army and was killed in 1942, at which time Kagen's uncle sent his nephew to a remote corner of Japan, where life for young Elstob would be more stable.

Kagen showed remarkable instinct for the martial arts and had a series of black belts by the time he was in his teens. His progress became newsworthy and, once in China — to which he had traveled after Hiroshima — Kagen was enlisted by a renowned Master and taught the secret powers of the Rajas, descendants of the world's most awesome and powerful sorcerers and warriors.

In 1960, Kagen, then twenty-two years old, began freelance assignments for the Chinese Secret Police; his successes were outstanding. By 1966, he was known worldwide as a top-rate agent, a man with loyalty to no one except the highest bidder.

Harry Colmus still found it all difficult to believe. The man at his right arm looked not a day over thirty, when, in fact, he was nearly fifty. Elstob was still extremely fit, a lean 175 pounds inside a six-foot frame; he was capable, and had killed, bare-handed, men three times his own weight.

But, Harry thought, *anyone who would let himself be known as "The Mystic" can't be wrapped all too tight; besides, who would live by choice where it snowed all year?*

"Well," Kagen explained, "the Chinese have been very good to me. In exchange for a thirty-acre dojo and the freedom to come and go as I please, absolutely unquestioned, all I have to do is train one hundred agents a year for them.

"Anything for a buck, eh?" Harry asked, cynically.

"Me for money, you for sex; right, Harry? Let's see . . . yesterday, at about this time, you lay between the breasts of a young girl, dark-skinned, probably Haitian, and you made love to her instead of working on your assignment, which was okay, because it was a . . . 'cake' assignment, I believe you'd call it."

"Who told you about that?" Harry demanded. "Have they been spying on me again?"

Elstob laughed. "Still an unbeliever, I see. Your mind told me what you did yesterday, just like it tells me that the real reason you don't like me is because of Gina. You think I stole her from you in St. Croix."

"Well you did, dammit! You and that hocus-pocus, mickey-mouse mindreading act of yours, telling her that she was really more interested in you than she was in me."

"I didn't make that up; her mind told me," Elstob replied, evenly, his blood pressure

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always at 110 over 65, no matter what stress he might be facing.

"I'll tell you what — "

"If I ever do that again, you'll kill me and hang me out on a line to dry," Elstob said, finishing Harry's thought, word-for-word, for him.

Harry fumed. "If you don't stop finishing my sentences I'll . . . "

"You'll kick my . . . "

"Dammit, Elstob."

"Sorry, but I hear what you're going to say before your tongue starts to move."

The tall, leggy stewardess stopped beside Elstob's seat to take their drink order.

"I'll have a gin and tonic. Harry?"

Without taking his eyes from the window, Harry mumbled, "Give me a — "

"They don't have 151-proof rum; what else would you like?" Elstob asked, smiling.

Harry glared at him.

"Be nice, Harry, you're having homicidal thoughts again.

"I see." Kagen said, picking up some more thoughts before turning to the stewardess. "He'll have as much of the strongest scotch you have in the largest glass you have with as little ice as you can spare, just enough to give the scotch a mild case of the shivers."

"How long 'til we land?" Harry asked, sharply, as the stewardess continued her rounds.

"About two and a half hours," Elstob replied, checking his watch.

"About? You mean you don't know for sure? I'm amazed."

"I don't predict the future, Harry; I only sense things that will happen by feeling an object's center. The same center tells me fairly accurately about the past, but very little about the future."

"Baloney," Harry smiled.

"The plane won't crash, if that helps."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

Elstob was sleeping as the DC-10 made its westward descent towards Puerto Rico, casting a tiny shadow over a long string of islands that stretched in the shape of a gentle half moon towards South America. Ten minutes from the ground, Elstob bolted awake, gripping Harry's arm as though he were having an attack.

"Anegada. Burch is in Anegada," he whispered. "In *The Settlement*." Quickly, Elstob's tightness passed and his cool composure returned before Harry knew what to make of the outburst.

"How can you be sure?" Harry asked, quietly.

"I feel it — very strongly.

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Make arrangements with your people as soon as we hit San Juan," Elstob said, leaning his head back and reclosing his eyes, "because we don't have much time."

"Why not?"

"They're killing him," Elstob replied, simply, drifting back to sleep until the plane landed in San Juan.

Harry moved Elstob quickly through the tangled snare of deplaning tourists at the airport, escorting him to a rented car that awaited them.

"We're not being followed, if that's what you're worrying about," Elstob said, as Harry slipped him through a side door, by-passing customs.

"I know," Harry smiled, "but I've got to get back here in less than three days. Every minute counts."

Harry opened the door to the Ford sedan and got in. He reached over to unlock Elstob's side and, as he did, there was a pistol barrel placed against the back of his skull.

"Where did he come from?" Harry asked Elstob, now seated beside him.

"He was there all the time," Elstob said.

"Thanks for the warning."

"You two quit talking. Give me your money," the native demanded.

"Don't do it," Elstob said, as Harry reached for his wallet.

"You better, mon, or I'll blow your head off," the robber threatened.

Patiently, Elstob turned to face his assailant. "With no bullets?"

"No bullets!" Harry turned towards the kid. "Get out of here, jerk."

The kid laughed, kicking open the rear door. "Heh, I almost had you. You smart bitch, mon," the kid told Elstob. "Smart bitch," he repeated, waving the gun.

Elstob waved good-naturedly as Harry sped out onto the dual-lane highway.

"Take it easy, Harry, he's just trying to make a buck."

"A lousy bunch of comedians. You and him both."

"This hot weather is ruining your sense of humor," Elstob sighed, shaking his head.

The men's link to Anegada was a twin-engined seaplane, piloted by Ian Remeda, a thirty-year-old Tortolan who'd performed similar duties for Harry in the past. The big, white bird hulked ungracefully through the sky like a wounded pelican, its engines rasping loudly.

Elstob was studying a wire photo that had been dispatched by CIA, San Juan. It featured a woman alleged to

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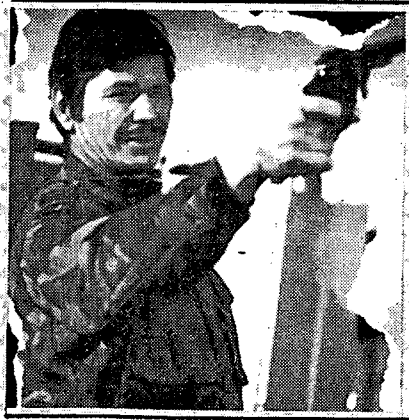

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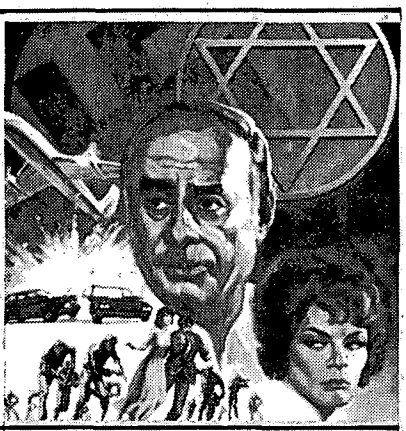

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have aided the kidnappers in luring Dr. Burch from his English hotel and transporting him to Anegada.

"Do you think you can find her?" Colmus shouted over the plane's mechanical rattles.

"I don't predict the future, but probably — if we survive the flight."

"If?" Harry asked.

"You should hear what that right engine's telling me," Elstob smiled.

"I love it," Harry moaned. He folded his hands in his lap, as he was wont to do when he was nervous, and thought about the island they were about to face.

Anegada, *Drowned One* in Spanish, was a very different sort of Virgin Island. It bore little if any tourist trade and only about five hundred natives, most of whom lived in the island's only town, *The Settlement*, which was where Elstob felt Burch was being held. There was no police force, no meaningful rules of conduct, no plumbing, some electricity, and a peak elevation of twenty-five feet. It was, in fact, a perfect place to hide someone. Harry wondered how Elstob knew Burch was there.

Remeda cut the engines and allowed the seaplane to coast close to the shore once he'd touched down. "Gentlemen, you're on your own," he said, opening the rear hatchway.

Harry splashed down first, in the warm, clear water, soaking his clothes up to his knees. Ahh, home, he sighed, pulling a cigar from his pocket and lighting it.

Elstob followed, with more grace and coordination than any man had a right to, especially one who hadn't been around water for two years, and he followed Harry onto the deserted beach, through a stretch of rough shrubs, heading towards the single-lane road that lay ahead through waves of hot air that rose from the white sand.

Harry remembered another of Elstob's annoying qualities: he didn't sweat. He always appeared to be entirely comfortable, as if the sun wasn't beating on them at tropical temperatures, but a mild 75° farenheit.

Neither man had shaved for forty-eight hours, so their style was grubby, like two working-class guys who'd given up the materialistic world for a breather in the uncaring Caribbean. Facing the island as such, they were picked up by the first vehicle that drove by.

The smiling Dutchman at the wheel seemed happy for the company. "Where you off to?"

"Any place that serves beer," Harry replied, with a laidback grin. He turned sideways in the

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backseat of the open vehicle and was surprised to see Elstob wearing a wide-brimmed, Panama hat. He pointed to it, as if to ask Elstob, *Where the hell did you get that?*

Elstob merely shrugged.

Bloody cheap, magical powers, Harry cursed; the sonofabitch pulled hats out of thin air.

It was in the bar that they found the woman. She was seated in the far corner of the pink, stucco hut, one of eleven patrons at that early-afternoon hour. No one paid much attention to the two white strangers; occasional beach bums were not unusual, and if they started any trouble, there was always the sawed-off under the bar and hungry sharks along the north shore.

"Two rums," Harry ordered, pointing to the full fifths of locally-bottled Mount Gay that lined most of the rear counter.

When the big-bellied bartender placed the almost clean glasses of rum on the bar, Elstob gestured him near. "Tell you what, mate, you pick any dollar bill out of your till; if I can tell you the serial number, you give us the drinks for free; if not, five bucks each," Elstob offered, pointing to the two glasses.

Figuring him for a sucker, the bartender quickly obliged, only to find himself an unbelieving loser.

"Thanks," Elstob said, downing half his drink.

"Wait a minute," the bartender warned, grabbing the trickster's thin arm with a meaty hand.

Harry was ready to run for it, but then the bartender called over a friend. The friend became Elstob's next victim, with the bartender pocketing the bet and rewarding Elstob with another free drink. Soon, everyone had been taken in but the girl, who'd stayed in the background, an unimpressed spectator.

Finally, with no one else left, she moved close, bringing along with her a heavy scent of island perfume that rose thickly from her large, sweaty bosom. She was not unattractive, but definitely tough, wearing only a ragged, thin red t-shirt, that fought to hold her swelling breasts still, along with a pair of cut-off shorts, bleached from the salt water. Her hair was black; very long and uncombed. She wore no make-up, and little in the way of an expression.

Elstob was amused. He adored different women. "Care to try?" he asked, pointing to a pile of unseen bills on the bar.

Harry waited anxiously for her reaction, puffing a second cigar. Elstob was clearly up to

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something.

"Why not my game?" the woman asked, pulling a worn deck of playing cards from her hip pocket and picking one from the pile, holding it so that only she could see its face. "What card?"

Elstob thought briefly. "Two of Diamonds."

She smiled and turned the card over. Jack of Hearts. The patrons went wild; the mystifying outsider had been beaten by a local.

"One more time," Elstob said, quieting the group, unabashed as usual.

"Maybe for money," she suggested.

"Why not," Elstob replied, igniting the group with this competitive edge. "How much have you got?"

"Not one cent, but I won't be losing."

"Well, you have to wager something."

"Okay," the woman replied calculatedly, "how about this?" she asked, pinching the material of her t-shirt. "And you, one-hundred dollars."

The ten men groaned. Harry felt himself choking on his own cigar, feeling Elstob was out of his league — definitely out of his homefield.

"Deal." Elstob peeled a bill from his pocket and slapped it onto the bar.

The woman picked another card, keeping it close to her face. Elstob knew that she was jerking him around. When she'd pulled the Jack of Hearts before, she'd been thinking, *Two of Diamonds* to throw him. Now, he'd just have to think harder.

"King of Clubs," he said, confidently, and from the look on her face, he knew he'd won. The woman had conned mind-readers before; she'd seen enough voodoo to believe. This, however, she didn't. This man was good — very good.

Slowly, she turned over the card. King of Clubs. The bar whooped with wild joy as she pulled off her blouse. Everyone reached unbashfully forward to grab a handful of her marvelous, naked breasts. Even Harry took a grab.

The woman smiled through it all — the gracious loser — never taking her eyes from Elstob. She could hear his thoughts talking to her, as the men closed in for a second go at her still uncovered breasts.

Tell me about Dr. Burch. Dr. Burch. She fought to think of something else, to block his thoughts out, but he was too strong — far stronger than any minds she'd ever felt touch hers before — and she was scared. *Dr. Burch; where is he?* She fought with every ounce of concentration she could muster, but she couldn't prevent him

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from raping her mind. She thought no words, but the pictures that she gave his mind would be enough. Now he knew where Burch was.

"Thank you," Elstob mouthed quietly, so that only she could hear, and he tipped his rum in a toast.

Suddenly, the woman bolted from the bar and ran wildly for the near shoreline, where she would swim until a boatload of fishermen would pick her up. The man in the bar had powers, *black powers,* like demons' powers, and she didn't intend to ever cross his path again for fear that she would die.

Elstob and Harry drank until the sun had turned purple and dropped from the sky. Harry was mildly polluted, from the rum and the wobbling breasts of the uninhibited native girls who teetered drunkenly after three fast glasses full of whatever was cheap. Elstob had half a bottle in him and showed no effect, so when he pulled Harry from a potentially-willing female, he made it through the door easily, while Harry required a few extra tries.

Outside, Harry felt as though the damp, warm air of the night was rushing by him, yet the palm trees were still and he was on his feet. Then, at one point, he felt scared like the woman, because he too felt Elstob's powers; he was moving to the other end of the island, where it was very dark and somewhat cooler, *without* any means of visible transportation. His skin felt clammy, except for where Elstob's warm hands held onto him. His heart pounded. He was surrounded by a strange sensation, an unreal vibration.

"It's only the rum," Elstob assured his wobbly partner.

Harry didn't think so.

The small house sat alone on a naked stretch of white beach, so close to the water's edge that the high tide — illuminated by a rising moon — shone brilliantly, ebbing towards its stoop. At one time, it had housed the elderly couple who manned the lighthouse, blaring out low moaning warnings to the sailors who unknowingly approached the hidden reef that had sunk over two hundred ships and taken many more lives. The lighthouse had fallen to rubble during the early seventies, victim of a vicious hurricane. The house had remained.

Burch was inside the abandoned house. He'd been delivered to this shore by a craftily-piloted trimaran that had made it through the reef. He was not alone inside; there was one other. A girl. Suddenly, Elstob cringed: They were both dead, Burch and the girl.

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"Don't you want help?" Harry asked, as Elstob left him on the beach and approached the house.

"Burch is dead, Harry."

"Damn."

"You stay here; I'll be right back." Elstob kicked off his shoes and dropped his hat by Harry's side, then stuffed his hands into his pockets.

Normally, there would have been nothing else to do. With Elstob, however, it was different. He would be able to discover what Burch had told his captors. He might even be able to pull the missile codes from Burch's memory.

There was no door, just a rectangular opening for Elstob to breach, kicking loose stones and peeling stucco from his path as he entered. Burch was slumped over in a chair, heavily bound by thick cord from his chest to his ankles. His face was swollen; dehydration, most likely.

The girl had been a very nasty trick. When Burch had refused to talk, no matter what pain he was subjected to, his captors had kidnapped the girl, pinned her to the wall, and taken their aggressions out on her — hoping Burch would have the humanity that his torturors lacked, and speak the codes that would spare the girl. The wide burn marks along her face, neck, breasts, and thighs were not pleasant. With very little concentration, Elstob could hear her screams continuing to spill unanswered out to sea.

Burch was a tougher old bastard than anyone had given him credit for being. Elstob placed his fingertips at Burch's temples and knelt on the dusty floor before him. A red-toned hologram glowed to life in hazy-focus above Burch's head, as what was left of his center told Elstob about his captivity.

Elstob quickly followed Burch's original kidnapping — his path through France, across the Atlantic, and then to Anegada. He watched Burch suffer a mild beating, in complete silence, never speaking a word. He saw him endure great pain, without the slightest expression, until the girl had been brought in. She'd screamed as her clothes were ripped away and nails were driven through her leather wrist and ankle bands, and she was secured.

When Burch had looked away, they made sure he could hear what they were doing to her. The sounds of the hot iron sizzling onto her flesh and the sour, putrid smell of burning skin started to wear Burch down. His heart, however, gave in before his mouth could.

Unsuccessful, the kidnappers left Burch to die, his chest exploding in pain as he re-

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mained tied to the chair. The girl was also abandoned. Since she had seen their faces, her veins had been opened so that she would bleed to death.

Now, Elstob had to reach even deeper into Burch's mind. He had to find the codes. The red hologram faded into an empty, three-dimensional tube. Elstob pressed. There had to be something. Slowly, another image appeared. It was of Burch himself, hunched over his computers, notebook in hand. He was transposing the codes onto paper.

The pages of computer jargon were folded into an envelope and stuffed into Burch's shirt pocket. Burch left the compound, walked to the English Channel, and dropped the papers into a half-filled trash bin. Elstob let Burch's path go and concentrated on what little center he could find in that trash bin.

Five minutes passed. Ten. Someone was touching the can. A Soviet agent. The agent searched through the garbage until he found the envelope. He opened it. Smiled. He had the codes. Burch had sold them to the Soviets. It was last spring.

So why kidnap Burch a year later? Elstob pressed on.

A mole inside the USSR told CIA; Poland, that the Soviets had the code; the code that no one in the free-world knew besides Burch. A hastily undertaken investigation uncovered evidence implicating Burch. He must be made to talk, Intelligence realized. The Soviets had the code to an English missile range that the English themselves couldn't aim or fire — only Burch was supposed to be able to do that.

It was actually the CIA, through a band of Cuban refugees, trained at Langley, that took Burch out of England — to make him talk. It was the Cuban freelancers that slipped away from their CIA bosses and brought Burch to Anegada, to torture him and the girl, and to ransom the information they'd get, back to the CIA. Neat. The agency had assigned Harry for exactly the reason they'd said, to find their "lost property." Elstob shook his head. And Harry wondered why he was loyal only to the highest bidder.

"Tell me it's a dream," Harry said, his weight supported by the room's doorjamb. He had seen the hologram.

"It's just a dream, Harry." Elstob moved quickly, hitting Harry on the forehead with the butt of his hand, and catching his unconscious friend before he hit the ground. Elstob had seen the codes written out by Burch; the Free World now had the access they'd killed Burch trying to get.

Harry's job was finished.

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The Other Man In The Pinstripe

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For the twelve years he had been assigned to London his name had been Charles Mortlock, and before many of those years had passed he had come to think of himself as an Englishman born and bred. The great city, its stone buildings encrusted with tradition, its narrow lanes and monument-dotted thoroughfares, the Thames winding among its wonders, all had enchanted and hypnotized him until he almost believed the details of his carefully constructed cover biography.

On the countless weekdays when his mission gave him nothing to do he would walk the London streets, or ride the red double-decker buses, or if the day was warm, cruise down the Thames on one of the tourist boats. On countless Sundays he had taken the train to Cambridge and paced its learning-haunted lanes un-

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til he knew the city as well as if he had indeed graduated from King's College, as his carefully forged certificates attested. He found it easy to justify his growing obsessions, for he was after all supposed to be English and a Cantabrigian, and the more he knew of his purported environs the better he could play his part.

First there had been the cultural training at the service's secret instructional center nestled deep in the mountains, two years of grueling indoctrination in the Queen's English and the history and mores of the British people. The proper accent, the vocabulary, the common likes and dislikes of those among whom he would live were ground into him day and night. He was made to drink tea with his breakfast and to have a pint of bitter with lunch and to read himself to sleep every night with an Agatha Christie, and in time he grew to like the way of life very much.

When his training was completed he was posted to London, where his assignment was to monitor the media, report on which journalists were friendly to his country's interests and which seemed hostile. In cases of extreme hostility he might be ordered to terminate an offender, but in Charles' years in London that had happened only once, and the woman had been a fool.

The rest of his service had been wonderfully peaceful; he had only to read the daily papers and newsweeklies, listen to the BBC broadcasts, and write periodic reports to his superiors. There were times when he thought his work made no more sense than that of Jabez Wilson, the character in a Sherlock Holmes story he had read in training school, the man who had been hired to copy out the Encyclopaedia Britannica in longhand. But, as he often reassured himself, it was not his function to question the usefulness of his mission.

And so over the years his tiny flat near St. John's Wood became home to him, his identity as an Englishman became the reality, and he hoped to stay in London for the rest of his life.

Until the day he began to sense that he was being followed.

On that bright Sunday morning in mid-June he rose early, brewed his pot of tea, straightened the flat, and wondered what he would do. His required reading on Sundays had been drastically reduced, thanks to the month's-long strike at the *Times*. It would be a fine morning for a stroll along the Victoria Embankment, and when it became warmer he would take the boat from Westminster Pier down to Greenwich and catch the Thames breezes.

He dressed in the English businessman's civilian uniform, a black pinstripe suit, locked the front door of his flat behind him, and bought a Sunday *Telegraph* at the corner news-agent's to read at his leisure during the day.

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It was down beneath the earth, sitting on a wooden bench in the St. John's Wood underground station, waiting for the next tube to Charing Cross, that he felt it. The resurrection of long-buried instincts from training school. *Someone was watching him*. Very cautiously he peered over the top of his *Telegraph* and studied the people on the platform around him. Yes, it was that man standing against a pillar, the one in the black pinstripe that might have been twin to Charles' own. He was sure that same suit, that same English face, had been behind him as he had walked along Wellington Road to the tube station. And now the man was waiting for the next Jubilee Line train to Charing Cross, just as Charles was himself.

Could it be a man from British Intelligence? Charles shrugged off the question as paranoiac and went back to his newspaper.

The train clicked into the station and Charles took an upholstered seat in a carriage that was virtually empty. The other man in the pinstripe must have entered one of the adjacent cars. For a moment Charles was tempted to leap out onto the platform at the last second and wait for the next train just to put distance between himself and the other man. Then he dismissed the notion as absurd. The other man was on this train but there was no reason to believe both men had the same destination. The other might plan to exit at Baker Street or Bond Street or Green Park rather than take the tube with Charles to the end of the line at Charing Cross.

The train rattled swiftly through the tunnels to its terminus. At Charing Cross, where Charles left his carriage and strode along the maze of underground corridors to the escalators, he was careful not to look back until he was on the moving stairway lifting him to ground level.

Then he turned around. The other man in the pinstripe was ascending on the same escalator, about 30 steps behind him.

That was when Charles decided to take evasive action.

At the top of the moving stairway he reversed direction, raced back down into the depths of the descending escalator, half ran through the underground corridors until he was on the Northern Line platform. He took a Northern to Tottenham Court Road, then switched to the Central going east to Liverpool Street Station. There he ascended to the upper level, entered the British Rail ticket office, and bought a second-class day return to Cambridge. The guard had not yet opened the departure gate leading to the train, and Charles wandered carefully around the vast high-ceilinged station. There was no sign of the other man.

Charles felt a certain pride that his simple maneuvers had thrown off the follower — if follower it was — and was looking forward to his

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unplanned visit to Cambridge by the time he joined the queue outside the departure gate. He found a vacant seat in a second-class carriage and sat back in his corner, his newspaper on the luggage rack above his head.

Just as the guard's whistle blasted and the train was about to depart, Charles heard the beat of running footsteps on the concrete platform outside the train and looked out the window curiously. His head jerked back as if he had been struck. The other man in the black pinstripe, clutching his furled umbrella in his right hand, had just caught the Cambridge train.

That was when Charles felt the first tremor of fear.

The train rattled along its prescribed route while Charles sat frozen in his seat and tried to think clearly about the situation. Someone was indeed shadowing him. The reappearances of the other man had been too numerous to be coincidental. Now, who could the man be? It wasn't the regular English police and it wasn't a jealous husband or brother, for Charles had been careful not to violate a single law except when under orders, and he had restricted his private life to an occasional streetwalker.

There were only three possibilities he seriously had to consider. First, the man could be British Intelligence, in which case Charles knew he must report to his control as soon as possible that he had been compromised. Second, he could be from Charles' own side, a political agent sent to observe him and make sure he was still reliable. Charles knew that such checks were periodically made on agents in the field, but the observers were almost always veterans of the game and rarely so unsubtle as to let their presence be known. The second theory was possible but not so likely as the first.

The third and most worrisome possibility was that the other man in the black pinstripe was opposition. And if that was the case, if the other side had discovered Charles' existence, he must be prepared at an instant's notice either to go into hiding or to terminate the pursuer or to take his own life.

As the train slowed to a stop at Audley End, an even more disturbing thought came to him. What if his own side had sold him out? After all, he himself could see little of great value that he had accomplished except for the termination of that beastly woman, which had happened three years ago. Might his superiors have decided to cut short his extended London holiday? But that was ridiculous! So much of his country's time and money had been invested in turning him into an Englishman. If his superiors were displeased, or thought his work in London no longer necessary, they could simply reassign him elsewhere. Why should they want to ex-

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pose him, to eliminate his usefulness forever?

The reasoning failed to quiet his fears. For any number of policy considerations of which he would never know, it might be expedient that he be terminated.

When the train braked to a slow stop at Cambridge, Charles raced into and then out of the crowded station, elbowed his way through a knot of students in faded jeans and into a cab. "Bridge Street," he barked. The taxi eased into the stream of northbound traffic, toward the heart of the hallowed city. Ten minutes later he paid his fare, slammed the cab door behind him, and started walking. It didn't matter where he went as long as he kept moving.

He followed the narrow sidewalks, passed in and out of the tiny lanes, traversed the lovely green quadrangles of the university's various colleges – St. John's, Trinity, Caius – and then paused for a while in the magnificent King's College Chapel, to sit and rest and think. It was the end of term, and Cambridge was full of students and their families, touring the city, drinking in pubs, punting on the narrow river that wound through the colleges like a miniature Thames. Hundreds of young couples were strolling through the streets, arms about each other's waists. The other man in the pinstripe could never follow Charles in such a throng. He was safe as long as he stayed in one place, here under the high arched ceiling, among the images of saints.

But when he had rested for half an hour he decided once again that he would be safer on the move, and so he left the chapel and emerged into the streets. Where was the other man? Actually, it had almost ceased to matter. If he knew his job he would wait at the station and watch all the London-bound trains until Charles returned, then board whatever train Charles took back. Why hadn't Charles thought of that before? All of Cambridge except the station was safe territory for him!

He spent the next two hours walking through the streets, drawing the calm of the city into himself until he was half convinced that the other man had been nothing but a daydream.

Then, turning the corner from Trinity Lane into Trinity Street at too brisk a pace, he collided with a man.

They both staggered and fell and Charles landed on the bottom, his breath whooshing out of him. The other man lurched to his feet, recovered his umbrella which had landed on Charles' leg, then offered a hand to help Charles up. "Sorry," he said softly. "Everything all right with you?"

Charles glanced up into the other's face and for a moment his heart stopped. It was the same English face that had followed him from St. John's Wood. The other man in the

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pinstripe. His manner looked so harmless, his voice so apologetic. Charles would have strangled him if Trinity Street had not been packed with passers-by. "Quite all right," he said, brushing himself off.

He stood erect, as if before a firing squad, looked his adversary squarely in the eyes, and willed him silently to move away. The other remained motionless as a statue in King's College Chapel. Then, after an eternity seemed to have gone by, the other man nodded slightly, "All right then," he said in that same softly apologetic voice, raised his umbrella in a sort of mad salute, and strode away in the direction of St. John's Street.

Charles dared not move. He stood rooted at the head of Trinity Lane, praying for an empty cab to come by. When one did, he halted it with a desperate whistle. "Station," he said, and settled back among the seat cushions, his heart still pounding. His watch read 5:09. If the cab made good time he could catch the 5:20 back to London.

The driver dropped Charles at the station four minutes early. He paid the fare, then fumbled for change to call his control at the emergency number, from one of the station phones. No good. All three phones were out of order. He cursed, ran for his train's platform, and caught the train just as the guard's whistle blew. The train clicked through the green peace of the countryside, then entered London's suburbs and finally the city itself. At the Liverpool Street Station he tried the emergency number again. This time the pay phone worked but there was no answer at the other end. Something died within him then. He felt abandoned to his fate.

His heart still thundered and his legs seemed made of gelatin. He took a cab to St. John's Wood, walked very slowly up the pathway to the door of his flat building, and let himself in. He locked the door of his own flat behind him, went to the liquor cabinet, and made himself a double brandy which he downed in one long swallow. Then he stumbled to the tiny round table in the corner, on which the phone stood.

And found the other man sitting in the armchair in the alcove.

"I hired a car in Cambridge," the other said in that same soft regretful voice. "Rather faster than British Rail, you know. I was certain you'd return here." He held an Italian pistol fitted with a silencer, but kept it pointed at the floor.

Charles sank back onto the sofa, calm now beyond caring, and waited for the shot. It didn't come. The other man sat motionless, smiling vaguely. Charles felt a slow peace filling him like the hush of the London dusk, and knew that he was already dying. He looked at the other's umbrella, lying on the carpet beside the chair.

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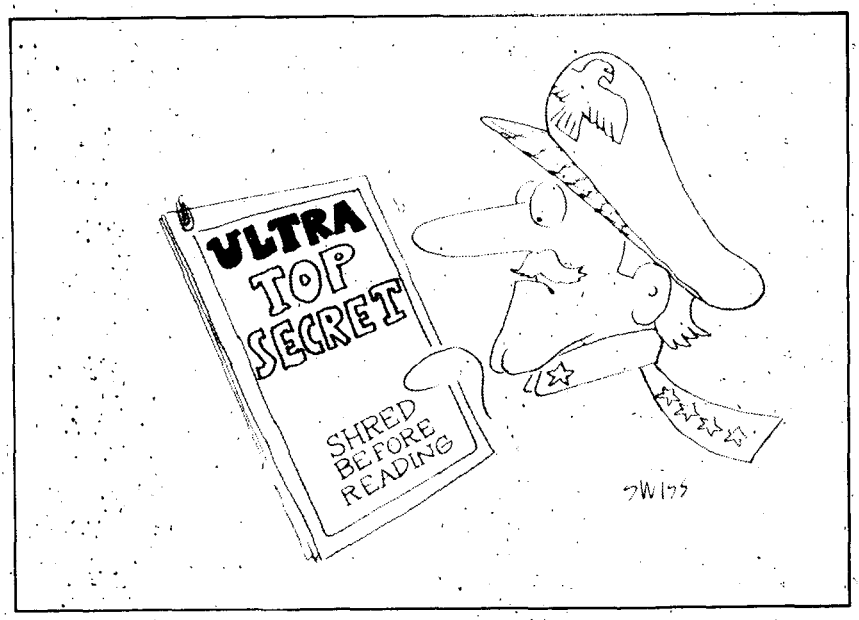
"You've seen it then," the adversary said. "One of those concealed hypodermics. The recipient isn't supposed to feel a thing. You didn't, back in Trinity Lane, did you?"

Charles tried to reply but his mouth muscles refused to work, and he knew he had only a few minutes left.

"I used the least painful poison known to us," the other went on. "You see, I am quite grateful to you. Four years ago, by pure reasoning, I convinced my own superiors that the other side must have posted an agent here to monitor the media. I really wasn't all that certain, but I wanted to be assigned to London. Then I discovered that you really did exist. For the last two years I've known precisely what your mission was. I've followed you everywhere, and you never noticed. You were accomplishing nothing, and so I felt no urgency in reporting that I had located you. But my control has grown impatient and it became a matter of my being reassigned or of terminating you and thus being allowed to stay on here and hunt whoever is sent to take your place."

Charles' head lolled against the back of the sofa. The other's words were relaxing him, helping him drift into slow sweet sleep. He scarcely heard the final question his adversary asked.

"And how could I bear to leave this magnificent city?"



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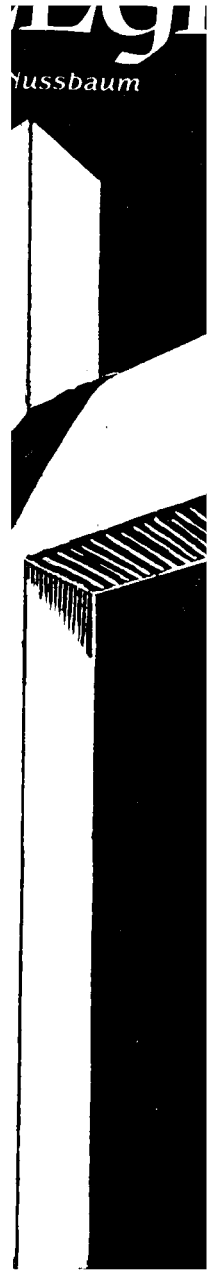

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Cramer's plane landed at De Gaulle International Airport, outside Paris, at 5:30 a.m. It had taken only a few hours to cross the Atlantic from Kennedy International. Plenty of time for remembering.

At 72, it seemed most of his thinking was about the past, and that was probably just as well. No one lives forever. If he didn't think about the past, he might despair at how little future he had.

He cleared customs with a minimum of delay. His French was rusty, but serviceable, his clothing both expensive and conservative, and he was armed with any traveler's best weapon — a diplomatic passport. All of which made him a poor target for harassment by petty officials.

The passport, of course, was genuine, but in a phony name — issued to him before he retired and never returned to the Agency.

Within half an hour, he was on the train bound for *La Gare du Nord*. He smiled behind his white moustache when he recalled his last flight to France. It hadn't been as comfortable as Air France. In fact, the pilot hadn't even bothered to land. He had simply circled the drop-zone north of Paris, one overcast night, and Cramer and young Kurtz had plunged silently through the starless sky, their black parachutes making them nearly invisible. He couldn't see it, but he knew Kurtz was smiling as they floated to earth, side by side. Paul hadn't shared Cramer's fear; he had felt only pleasant anticipation.

When Cramer emerged from the station, he was feeling tired. Happily, Lily was waiting for him in a nearby car. Now a grandmother several times over, she retained traces of the cool-eyed, hot-blooded teenager she once had been. Cramer approached as briskly as his 72 years would allow, and the old French woman opened the door for him.

"You haven't changed much," she said.

"You're a liar," he told her. "Do you know where we're going?"

"Yes."

"Then let's go," he said. "The workmen are due at 8:30, and the cemetery is over 100 kilometres from here."

She pulled smoothly into the light traffic flow and accelerated.

Cramer settled back on the soft, leather seat. He had never

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expected to return to France. In truth, he had never wanted to. In a life filled with unpleasant memories, it seemed most of his were of here. If it weren't for his outrage — he could think of it no other way — he never would have returned. A hero, certainly a hero of the magnitude of Paul Kurtz, should be allowed to rest in peace. But if that is not to be, someone should be present to ensure that his patriotism, his courage, and his sacrifice were not desecrated along with his grave.

"Progress," the officials called it. Putting a new road through a graveyard filled with heroes was progress to them. "If it weren't for Paul Kurtz and others like him, you would be speaking German today, not French," Cramer had pointed out in a transatlantic phone call.

It had been like talking to a wall. Nothing he said could alter their enthusiasm for the new road. In the end, he was happy they weren't going to simply pave over the grave. They intended to move the remains to another, nearby plot.

"If you are determined to move him," Cramer declared, "give me custody of the body. I'll bring him home. I'd like him to have a place of honor in Arlington National Cemetery, and the memorial he deserves."

The motorcar slowed and made an abrupt left turn through the open gates of the cemetery. It moved over the narrow road, kicking up white gravel behind it, and stopped beside an unmarked gray van. The side door of the van was open and four men in faded workclothes were unloading an assortment of picks and shovels from it. They must have arrived only moments before.

Cramer climbed stiffly from the car. The graves were all marked with plain white crosses. Each had a small brass plate, etched with the name and dates of birth and death for the deceased. Cramer found the one that said PAUL KURTZ 1920-1944 and pointed it out to the workmen. It was one of the few graves that seemed to have been cared for regularly. That would be Lily's work, he figured. Then he returned to the car, settled onto the comfortable seat to wait, and let his thoughts slip backward once again...

Despite the heavy pack he carried, Cramer's landing was soft. The drop-zone was a freshly plowed field, and he sank to his shins in the rich black soil. It

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cushioned what otherwise would have been tooth-jarring shock. Paul Kurtz landed equally softly, not twenty yards away. They were immediately surrounded by a number of grim-faced men.

The men all carried German weapons — Mauser rifles and 9mm submachine guns. They were short men with thick, heavy-limbed bodies. Cramer started to reach for his weapon, but stopped when he remembered that most Frenchmen were short by American standards. He gave a sigh of relief. He and Kurtz were behind German lines, but safe among the partisans, the people they had been sent to help.

After burying their parachutes, he and Kurtz were hidden in a nearby farmhouse. In the morning, they were smuggled into Paris aboard a produce truck. Two days later, they went on their first raid with the partisans, and the legend began.

The target that night was a fuel dump outside the city. It supplied gasoline for all the German tanks in the area. If the fuel could be destroyed, the tanks would be rendered useless.

The plan was a simple one: Half the partisans would attack from the north, firing rifles and throwing grenades. As soon as the defenders turned their attention to them, the second half would launch an attack from the south. The thought was, the main attack would meet less resistance and would be able to destroy the fuel before retreating.

It was a good plan as far as it went. The trouble was, the fuel dump was guarded by twice the number of Germans expected. And they weren't gray-uniformed infantry, but black-suited, elite SS troops. They weren't drawn out of position by the false attack from the north, and when the second attack came from the south, they were ready for it. The partisans ran into a solid wall of small arms fire.

Those partisans still able to flee ran for their lives, forced to leave the dead and wounded behind. Hours later, they met in the basement of an abandoned building. It was then they learned the full extent of their failure — less than half of their band had returned.

And Paul Kurtz wasn't among them.

Shortly after sunrise, Lily, the teenager who acted as a messenger for the partisans, arrived. She had been outside Gestapo Headquarters when Paul Kurtz was dragged inside,

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kicking and fighting every step of the way.

"He would be better off dead," Francois, the leader of the partisans, said. "No prisoner has ever left that building alive. And most of them have been so cruelly tortured, they have been buried in closed coffins. No one ever saw them again." He nodded sadly, then straightened.

Some of the partisans looked accusingly at Cramer. Not that they thought it was his fault. It was just that they all wished it were he who had been captured, rather than Kurtz. In the short while the Americans had been with them, Kurtz had won everyone over. He had seemed to think and act like a Frenchman, and his accent was Parisian.

Cramer, on the other hand, didn't mix well with new people, and his French, though understandable, was a dialect peculiar to Quebec, Canada, where he had spent summer vacations. Kurtz had already fit in while Cramer was still trying to make a place for himself. The only good thing was the Germans couldn't hope to get much information from Kurtz. He hadn't been around long enough to learn anything important.

They abandoned the few hiding places Kurtz had visited and found new ones. And they kept watch in the courtyard outside Gestapo Headquarters. Each morning, the dead were brought out of the building, and their wooden coffins lined up in the courtyard. As Francois had said, most of the plain pine boxes were nailed shut. The names of the occupants were lettered across the top in chalk, and it was up to their friends and relatives to find them and see to their burial. The partisans watched for Kurtz's name, but it was never there.

Then, one evening, there was a knock at the door of their new hideout, a dressmaker's shop. One of the men looked through a peephole and hissed, "It's an SS sergeant!"

They all scrambled for the next room, while the dressmaker advanced bravely to answer the door. As soon as she opened it, the SS sergeant ducked inside. "Tell Francois that Paul Kurtz has returned from the dead," he said.

Cramer couldn't believe his ears. He pushed the doorhanging aside and looked into the shop. There stood Paul Kurtz in a Nazi uniform, a wide grin on his face. The other men pushed past Cramer to pat Paul on the back and ask in awed

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tones how he had managed to escape. No one else had ever done it. No one!

"It wasn't hard," Kurtz explained modestly. "I waited until the guard was changing today, then tricked the new man into opening my cell. I knocked him out, put on his uniform, and walked away with the last of the guards going off-duty."

"Didn't anyone say anything to you?" Francois asked.

"Sure, they did. And I answered them. Told them I was a new man. Then I asked questions about the city."

"You speak German?"

"As good as my French," Kurtz laughed. "That was something they didn't know, and they were careless."

Kurtz looked into the faces of the partisans. "Like most Americans, I'm a mongrel," he said. "My mother is French and my father is German. In fact, my dad was in the German army during the First World War. He was stationed here in France. When the war was over, he came back and married my mother. They were going to stay here, but — " he gave a wry grin " — there was, understandably, a lot of bitter feelings against Germans. That's why they went to the United States. I was born in Milwaukee." He smiled again. "It's a good thing I met Marcel on the street, or I might not have found you."

With his escape, Paul became a major hero of the resistance. It was something no one else had been able to do, even with help. He had managed to do it alone, and all he had to show for his ordeal were a few bruises. Everyone wanted to meet him, and partisans came from as far away as Bordeaux just to shake his hand.

Francois' group had numbered twenty men and three women before the attack on the fuel dump. The attack had left them with less than ten men able to fight. Hardly enough for any important undertakings. But many of the men who came to meet Paul decided to stay with the group. Others vowed to return whenever they were needed. They all wanted to work with Paul; he was a hero, and he was lucky.

Paul found a bright red shirt somewhere and decided to wear it during their raids against the Germans. Other men wore clothing that would help them blend in with the darkness, but not Paul. He wanted to be seen and remembered, he said, and red was his lucky color.

The raids Paul led were outstanding for their daring suc-

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cess. He always reported back that his men had done what they had set out to do. He lost more men than any other leader, but those who returned with him had nothing but praise for Paul. He was the toughest, bravest man they knew. There were stories of him charging across open ground in front of machine guns and getting away unhurt. It seemed as though his lucky shirt had made him both bulletproof and invisible. And every time he fired his weapon, they swore, at least two Germans fell.

Thinking back, Cramer knew that what happened was inevitable. Men who had been proud to stand beside Paul were soon overcome with envy and jealousy. Because of his self-confidence and success, Paul got all the attention. No one ever seemed to talk about anyone else. And Lily, whom everyone loved, became his girl; they spoke of a marriage when the war was over.

Cramer could understand the envy — he had to admit he wished his French were as good as Paul's, and that Lily was his girl. But jealousy, for many, turned into open dislike and revealed itself in the grumbling that began:

If Paul's raids are so successful, why do the Germans seem to have more food, fuel, and ammunition than ever before? How come the Germans always seem to be waiting for them? And how can he expose himself in that red shirt, time after time, and go unharmed unless the Germans are trying *not* to hit him? There is something odd about that escape of his. What if the Germans have recuited him to work for them? It is possible. After all, he is half German. He admitted it himself. And he has no reason to love the French after the way his parents were treated.

Cramer listened and got angry. "Paul and I are members of the O.S.S.," he pointed out. "The Germans consider us spies. If we were captured, they would execute us, not try to hire us."

"Paul *was* captured," someone said, "and he *wasn't* killed."

"That's right," another added. "He wasn't even beaten very badly."

There was only one thing Cramer could do — go to Francois. Even though the suspicions were crazy, the product of envy and jealousy, Francois had to know, and it was Cramer's duty to tell him. Francois was the leader Cramer and Kurtz had been sent to help and were under his orders

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as long as they were there.

Francois sat smoking his pipe and he listened. The lines of his face seemed to grow deeper as Cramer's story unfolded. At the end, he sat quietly for a long time. Finally, he broke the silence. "That is very sad," he said. "It is not our place to judge a comrade."

"I know that," Cramer agreed. "And this is getting out of hand. What can we do about it?"

"These are dangerous times," Francois said. "If a man's loyalty is suspect, no matter how foolish it may seem, there is only one thing we can do — kill him. Leave judgment to God."

Cramer was stunned. This was a reaction he hadn't anticipated. How could they kill him? My God, he was a hero!

"There will be a raid on a German ammunition dump tonight," Francois announced. "You are to go with Paul. See to it that he does not return."

"B-but — ?"

"And let us never speak of this again," Francois said, closing the conversation.

There was a deep ditch along the far side of the road that passed in front of the ammunition dump. Cramer and Kurtz crouched there while waiting for the partisans to get into position. Paul wore his usual confident smile, but nervous sweat was making Cramer's shirt stick to his back.

Two German sentries guarded the main gate to the dump. There were certain to be a dozen more inside. Soon, two of the partisans were due to drive up in a captured staff car. They would crash it through the gate; and everyone else would leap forward and follow them inside.

That was the plan, but Cramer changed it. He poked the back of Paul's flame-red shirt with the barrel of his .45. "Go take those two sentries," he ordered, indicating the guards at the gate.

Paul looked back down at the weapon. Then he looked at Cramer. His grin seemed to slip for a second, but then it was back as bright and full as before. "Sure," he said. "Nothing to it." He didn't seem to mind the suicidal order.

In an instant, he was over the edge of the ditch, running toward the gate as fast as his feet would carry him. He stopped suddenly in the center of the road to fire a burst from his weapon. Standing there, he was bathed in the light

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from the dump's spotlights. He fired another burst, without noticeable effect, then advanced toward the gate again.

A burst of fire came from the darkness of the dump; the ground at his feet exploded from the impact of bullets, and he fell. A siren sounded and it seemed to Cramer that every light in the world went on. Germans came from every direction, most of them in the dreaded black uniforms. Cramer looked over to where Paul lay. He couldn't tell where or how badly he was hit. The red shirt was the same color as blood.

Through a combination of luck and accurate shooting, Cramer managed to escape. He and one other man were the only ones who did. When they reported back to Francois, they learned that Paul was still alive and being held at Gestapo Headquarters. Lily had recognized him by the red shirt when they carried him inside.

Cramer wanted to raid the place and rescue Paul, but Francois wouldn't hear of it. "We have lost too many men already," he said. "It would be crazy."

A week later, the women sent to collect bodies from the courtyard reported a closed coffin with the name PAUL KURTZ chalked on the lid. And Lily overheard some guards talking. "Paul didn't tell them a thing," she said. "Just his name, rank, and serial number. He was a hero to the end."

"Cramer? Cramer?" Lily's voice pulled Cramer out of his reverie and back to the present.

"Wha—? Yes?"

"The workmen are ready to lift Paul's coffin," she said.

Cramer got out of the car and walked to the edge of the grave. The coffin was surprisingly well-preserved, considering it had been in the ground for over forty years. It had been made from the roof joists of a bombed-out building, not the usual thin pine boards, and it was wrapped in tar paper.

"Work carefully," Cramer said. "This man was a hero." Then he stepped back to let them do their job.

Of course, even the partisans who had talked behind Paul's back had had to admit they were wrong. Paul was a hero. It was too bad he had had to die to prove it. And one of the proudest moments of Cramer's life had been when he had stood beside Paul's parents in the White House rose garden as President Truman awarded their hero son the Congressional Medal of Honor.

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Paul's parents had never become citizens. They had never been able to learn the required English. Perhaps that was why Paul's French and German had been so good. It was ironic. The circumstances that had made Paul such a valuable agent had also kept his parents from becoming citizens of the country he died for. It didn't seem fair.

A few years after the presentation of the medal, Cramer had gone to Milwaukee on other business. He had hoped to visit Paul's parents while there — talk to them, tell them again what a wonderful man Paul was. Unfortunately, they had moved and no one could tell him where. So he began to tell strangers about Paul Kurtz, the fighter in the red shirt, the hero of the French resistance. For forty years he had made certain that everyone he met heard about Paul's heroism. Cramer had seen Paul Kurtz progress from friend, to comrade, to legend. He wanted everyone to know the story.

Two of the workmen jumped into the open grave. One tried to lift an end of the coffin while the other got ready to pass a rope beneath it. Suddenly, part of the lid came free and crumbled in the man's hands. He and the other workman stopped and stood open-mouthed staring into the wooden box.

Cramer walked to the graveside and looked down. The coffin contained no body, only a dozen large rocks and the rotting remains of a red shirt.

Cramer stumbled back and turned away, moving blindly past Lily. He made his way to the black sedan and leaned against the front fender for support. He took short, shallow, rapid breaths that didn't give him enough air, and his chest swelled, filling with a rage as great as it was impotent.

Did you know...

By the end of World War II, there wasn't a German spy in Great Britain who was not under British control. All were either cooperating with the British, while maintaining their German "alliance," or had been caught and "turned around."

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ON FILE.....

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

by Richard Walton

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It had been a hard night, picking the brains of Western guests at the dinner party. So, with relief, the half-dozen Communist attaches pushed aside their soft drinks, as the last visitor departed, and reached for the vodka. There were guests, too, at the Indonesian Embassy, who were allowed to stay for some private drinking and to talk of the information picked up during the night's social chit-chat.

All but one man, Smiljan Pecjak, who was already shrugging impatiently into his top-coat and making for the door.

"So early?" queried Bulgarian press officer Anton Zifling, dropping a slice of lemon into three fingers of Stolichnaya.

Pecjak replied with a smile: "I've heard nothing interesting here tonight. I'm going out to have some fun."

Pecjak, suave Yugoslavian Foreign Ministry official, was telling the truth. What he did not tell his Iron Curtain comrades was that he was doing a little night spying, too; combining business with pleasure in the literal sense.

He was the perfect Communist in the Party mold, hand-picked, Moscow-trained, and he had fought beside Tito under the German occupation when the marshall was simply humble Josip Broz. And when Tito swept to power later, Pecjak stood by him through the early fifties when Russia seemed poised to take over the country.

His reward was a string of top embassy posts in Italy, France, and the United States and, finally, in the summer of 1958, London, where he became a senior entertaining diplomat for the Iron Curtain bloc.

What followed was a classic spider and fly entrapment, but the roles were subtly reversed...

One sunny afternoon, Pecjak strolled into a party, in the Central Office of Information skyscraper, on the Thames bank, and was introduced to fifty-year-old senior British government official, Miss Barbara Fell.

Barbara had everything going for her. Daughter of Sir Godfrey Fell, one-time top administrator in Britains's Indian Raj, she had been to private schools, attained an honors degree in history at Oxford, and her brilliant mind had boosted her like a rocket through the ranks of the civil service. By 1958, she was at the height of her profession with the Ministry of Information, had been honored by the Queen, and was handling top-secret information all the time.

There was only one thing wrong...She was a non-starter in the "university" of life. The spinster had never had boyfriends and fell immediately for Pecjak's charm; hook, line and sinker.

He invited her to lunch, then to a party, and soon began to confide in her his misgivings about the Communist way of life.

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▲ Pecjak, a hand-picked secret agent, was close to Marshal Tito.

Barbara was delighted. She was facing a rare opportunity to blend business with pleasure — picking Pecjak's brains and converting him to the Capitalist way of life to the point where he would defect to the West and bring vital secrets with him. She had no idea that Pecjak was on the same track, and the fly, in fact, was snaring the spider...

Time passed and they were no longer kissing goodnight on her doorstep. They were sharing breakfast in bed in what Barbara was later to admit had been "a lunatic affair."

"You have no idea how I long for the freedom of the West," the Yugoslav sighed one morning.

"Then come over to us," Barbara urged. "You'll be happy here."

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Pecjak, hung back. He needed to be sure; wanted to know what kind of work he would be involved in.

Barbara showed him, handing over Foreign Office documents for him to look at, on his promise to return them the next day.

He did so, and received many more.

But as Barbara was penning memos to her own staff stressing the need for tight security, Pecjak was passing the information she gave him straight on to Belgrade.

"I'm interested in your diplomats," he said, one day. "How do they get information back when they're unable to use the diplomatic bag? What codes do they use?"

Incredibly, by then completely under his spell, sure he was enmeshed in her own web, Barbara told him...

One night, in her luxurious London flat, as she was closing the curtains before they went to bed, she glanced into the street below and saw a man standing in the shadows. "My goodness!" she laughed, "I think your Communist friends are following you!"

Pecjak took a look, himself, and recoiled. It was time to quit while he was ahead. The man outside was no Communist. He recognized him as a British Special Branch agent.

A few minutes later, Pecjak held Barbara close for the last time. "I have to return home for Christmas, darling," he said, "But I'll be back soon with whatever I can pick up in Belgrade. I'm coming over to you!"

January came in 1962, but the suave Casanova did not return. In fact, he was being wined and dined and promoted in the Foreign Ministry back home, by his grateful masters.

Day after day, Barbara waited for the telephone to ring, or a letter to arrive, and she worked on, still too naive to realize what had happened to her. Her illusion was finally shattered when Chief Inspector Dave Stratton of the Special Branch walked into her office to arrest her.

She told the Special Branch all she knew, dismayed and heartbroken when informed that the information she had given Pecjak had gone straight to Belgrade.

"But I believed him to be a potential friend of the West," she sobbed. "I was sure I could bring him over!"

As she was jailed for four years at London's Central Court in December 1962, a brave but sad little smile puckered her mouth. Her brilliant career was over.

A few days later, in Belgrade, Pecjak beamed broadly as an Order of Merit was pinned on his chest.

He shrugged when told of his former mistress' fate. "The web she spun was not strong enough," he grinned. "The fly caught the spider!"

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Spying Through Time

by Joe Lewis

Although Washington's troops lost New York militarily during the War for Independence, the city continued to be of value to the general. No doubt thinking that if you can't beat them, you can at least watch them, Washington provided for a New York spy ring after his retreat. The name of this network was the Culper Ring. One member was Robert Townsend, and his story is a tragic one.

Robert Townsend was a young Quaker merchant when he was approached by the leader of the Culper Ring, then in its infancy as a spy network. Townsend was a valuable addition to the group for two reasons: First, he had an excellent cover, as his business brought him to New York City often, giving him an excellent chance to watch British maritime activity. Second, he was a columnist for a very popular Tory publication, Jemmy Rivington's Gazette. This position gave him access to much information, as well as providing him further cover.

In the spring of 1779, Townsend moved to New York, setting up a dry-goods store on Smith Street. The store was a classic front for an information clearinghouse. Agents would visit Townsend's store and provide him with intelligence, and couriers would come to the store and pick it up. The information that Townsend passed along was recorded on paper in Sympathetic Stain, an invisible ink. Townsend would place the paper containing the intelligence within a blank ream of paper, repackage the whole thing and then "sell" the paper to Washington's courier.

Townsend gathered data in three different ways. His most useful information came as a result of his work as a columnist. British officers, always anxious to get a mention in Townsend's social column, would drop by and "impress" Townsend with their importance by giving him tidbits of military detail.

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Townsend also gathered information first hand, wandering the island confidently, taking note of British movements and checking their weaknesses and strengths. His presence was never challenged, but rather welcomed by vain British officers.

Finally, Townsend gathered information from other agents. The most enigmatic agent that he dealt with was a woman known to us only as 355. She was Townsend's lover, and she was also a very important spy. Although we are not sure of the ways in which she gathered her information, we have clues as to how important that information was.

The first clue is that when Townsend asked his pregnant lover to marry him and move to the calm of Pennsylvania, away from the intrigue and danger of New York, she refused him. She was not ready to give up the cover she had worked so hard to create. The information she was getting had to have been important since she was unwilling to abandon her activity.

The second clue to the value of her intelligence comes from the Benedict Arnold episode. When Arnold defected, 355 was the only New York spy to be picked up. She was sentenced without trial — not unlike Nathan Hale — to imprisonment aboard the prison ship, Jersey, where she died.

Townsend remained in New York for another few years, although the spy business was less than thriving after Arnold's defection. Finally, on the eve of General Washington's return to New York, after the peace treaty of 1783 had been signed, Townsend began to pack his bags for Pennsylvania. It was a broken man that was visited by the leader of the Culper Ring that night. Benjamin Tallmadge watched as Townsend packed.

"But His Excellency (Washington) wants to meet you and express his thanks. He feels honor bound to give your service the public acclaim that it deserves."

"Acclaim?" Townsend looked at Tallmadge. "For betraying everything I believe in? For losing what I valued most? I've lived four years of my life in fear, and I'll live the rest of it in shame. All I ask is to be forgotten."

The reluctant spy, Robert Townsend, alias Samuel Culper Jr., left for Pennsylvania before meeting with his commander, General Washington. He lived out the rest of his days there, until he died on March 7, 1838, at the age of eighty-four.

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THE PLANTED PICTURES: A Puzzle

In early 1980, Iraq and Iran conducted extensive military maneuvers along their lengthy common border. War was obvious, it appeared to the world, and probably imminent. The intelligence bureaus of both Islamic nations spied on each other, striving to fathom the extent of the nearby enemy's military capabilities.

Abdullah Habib, Iraqui chief of confidential operations, with two accomplices, successfully and stealthily broke into the offices of the Iranian consulate on the night of June 20th of that year. Expertly, the safe was quickly opened, its contents carefully removed, hastily scanned, and immediately photographed. Then everything was quickly returned to the easy-to-open safe, fingerprints were wiped away from all surfaces, and the three international lawbreakers returned to their consular headquarters in Manhattan. There, one document only seemed to hold promise of the information they desired. It consisted of nine unrelated illustrations, beneath a simple message, reading, "Young Haraji Manzarah suffers from terminal illness. Please send him a copy of THE FAMOUS PICTIONARY. The pictures below are taken from that book. Lovingly, Kashmira."

The nine illustrations are reproduced here. ⟶

Abdullah guffawed. What idiots those Iranian intelligence experts were. Did he, Abdullah, believe for a moment that any sensible government agent would leave such childishly simple clues lying around for the pickings? Did the Iranians believe the Iraqi agents would believe the obvious false message concealed in the nine pictures? Hurrying into the F.A.O. Schwarz world famous children's store, Abdullah purchased a copy of the picture book mentioned in the clumsily-planted document.

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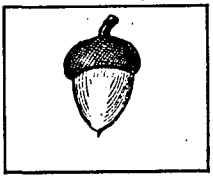
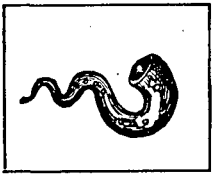
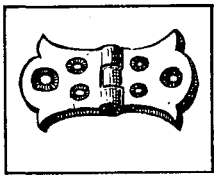
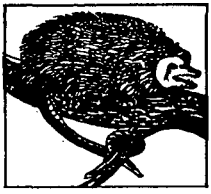
Slowly, carefully, he located, wrote, and studied the identification of each picture. When finished, he analyzed these nine words: IDLER, ACORN, HYENA, SERPENT, HINGE, ARTIST, OPOSSUM, BANJO, MOB. Then, he rushed a cablegram to King Hussein in Baghdad. The next day, Iraq attacked Iran, and the bloody, costly, four-year war began.

What was the planted message contained in those nine pictures? How did Abdullah successfully decode the disinformation? If the answers elude you, turn this page for the solution.





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SOLUTION: The keyword in Kashmira's message is TERMINAL. That word was intended to inform the reader that the first and last letters of all nine pictures, was written in consecutive order as shown by the arrangement of the pictures, yielding these characters: I-R-A-N-H-A-S-T-H-E-A-T-O-M-B-O-M-B. Obviously, that was untrue. Iran hoped to frighten Iraq from waging war. But the Iraquis knew that if Iran had the atom bomb, she would not publicize the fact. So, Iraq ignored the false message and attacked Iran.

Solution to Cipher #2 February 1985 Issue

CIPHER #2

RNAJB	JZNOW	PFANJ	WVQNN	ZJRKQ	BFATQ
LVCFN	HAWYR	BPTRT	BVFJM	YAKWQ	SAQPP
AVFJM	HAJLJ	MPCRG	QERAT	ZLZQN	SQWTS
LTQQK	FAVZQ	BPPSQ	REYFE	HAVZQ	YVZPY
SBYZQ	CFVNJ	XSZYF	PTYRN	VQMQL	RXQKQ
NSQSR	XJVYP	ZPWBF	AVZQM	YFEHA	STWBA
NEKQT	QNNSQ	SGQVZ	QSPJJ	CZSXS	VZQSG
GYPRS	WPSGQ	MQYDS	JPPJN	QNNAH	NANTN
QMQFR	AWPWO	NYRML	JMQNN	FRWYX	VHFBF
QTQQS	PJJCZ	PYXYY	TNEQN	XLMKJ	JKQKF
AVZLT	EBVQN	NVQMQ	LRXLT	KWOCQ	

Records examined at the Hoover Institute of War, Revolution and Peace mention only one foreign ship that assisted in the repatriation, the HMS Madras. But two U.S. ships are mentioned that do not appear in the National Archives. These are the Aeolus and the Archer. Apparently, some of the Czechs went to Camp Kearney on their way to Trieste. Aeolus may have been involved in this, but the mention is vague.

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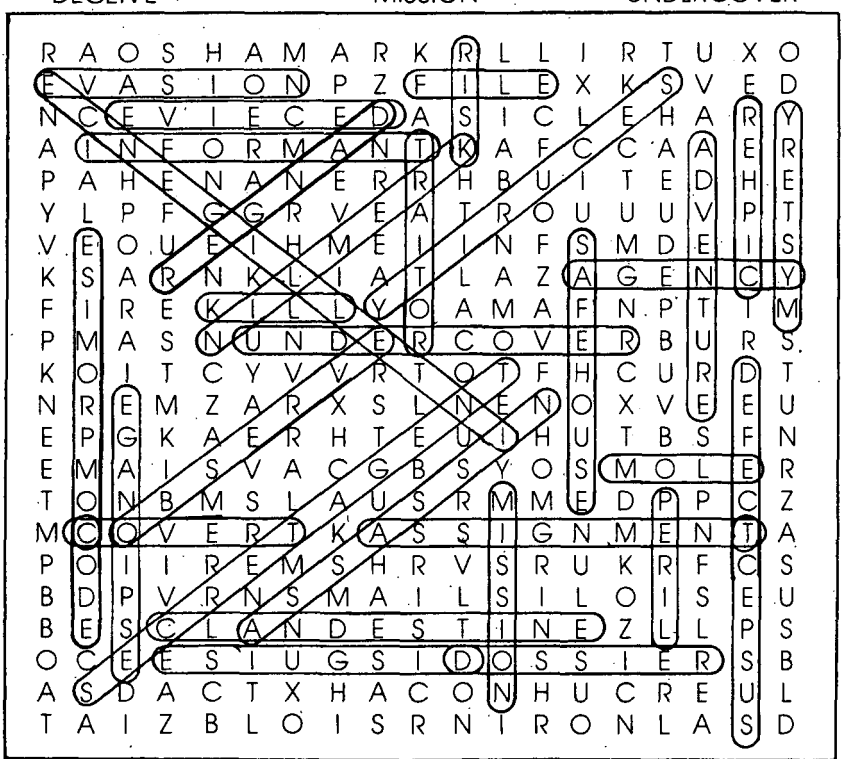
Solution to Spy Search February 1985

ADVENTURE
AGENCY
ASSASSIN
ASSIGNMENT
CIPHER
CLANDESTINE
CODE
COMPROMISE
COVERT
DANGER
DECEIVE
DEFECT
DISGUISE
DOSSIER
ESPIONAGE
EVASION
FILE
INFORMANT
INTELLIGENCE
KILL
KREMLIN
MISSION
MOLE
MYSTERY
OBSERVE
PERIL
RISK
SAFE HOUSE
SECRET AGENT
SECURITY
SUSPECT
TRAITOR
UNDERCOVER


R A O S H A M A R K R L L I R T U X O
E V A S I O N P Z F I L E X K S V E D
N C E V I E C E D A S I C L E H A R Y
A I N F O R M A N T K A F C C A A E R
P A H E N A N E R R H B U I T E D H E
Y L P F G G R V E A T R O U U U V P T
V E O U E I H M E I I N F S M D E I S
K S A R N K L I A T L A Z A G E N C Y
F I R E K I L L Y O A M A F N P T I M
P M A S N U N D E R C O V E R B U R S
K O I T C Y V V R T O T F H C U R D T
N R E M Z A R X S L N E N O X V E E U
E P G K A E R H T E U I H U T B S F N
E M A I S V A C G B S Y O S M O L E R
T O N B M S L A U S R M M E D P P C Z
M C O V E R T K A S S I G N M E N T A
P O I I R E M S H R V S R U K R F C S
B D P V R N S M A I L S I L O I S E U
B E S C L A N D E S T I N E Z L L P S
O C E E S I U G S I D O S S I E R S B
A S D A C T X H A C O N H U C R E U L
T A I Z B L O I S R N I R O N L A S D

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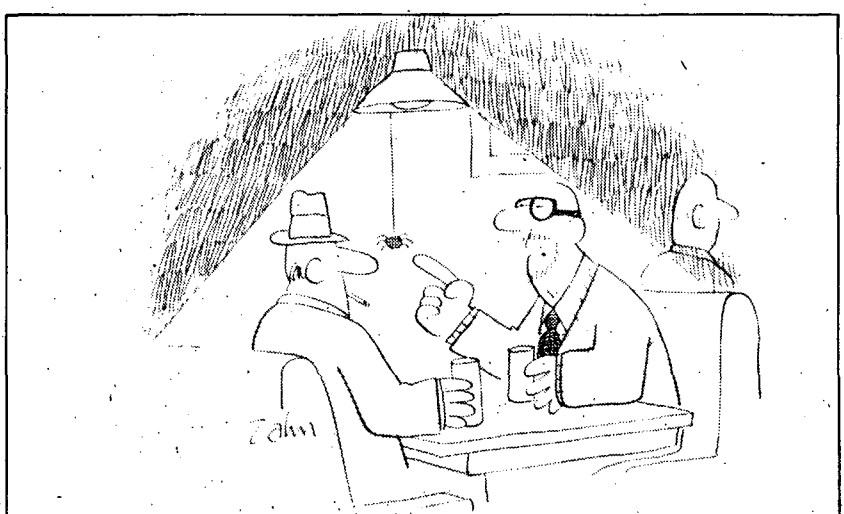
Did you know...

After Pearl Harbor, the United States continued to be in grave danger from Japanese attack, and the crippled American Pacific Fleet desperately needed to know when and where the next Japanese punch would be thrown.

The question of "where" was the task of the Navel Combat Intelligence Team, who already knew that the Imperial Navy used a grid code corresponding to their geographic maps to denote locations. Intercepted traffic revealed countless mentions of "AF," undoubtedly the next target for the Imperial Fleet. Combat Intelligence was pretty sure that "AF" meant Midway Island, but the problem was to get proof.

As it turned out, it was a fairly simple matter. The Navy told the Marine garrison at Midway to radio back *in the clear* that they were running short of fresh water. It was expected that the Japanese would intercept the message. Two days later, Combat Intelligence was reading an intercept of the Imperial Fleet stating that "AF" is short of fresh water."

The Navy was able to concentrate its forces in time and to defeat the Japanese at Midway. Without the early identification of "AF," Midway Island would have fallen and, with it, America's war in the Pacific might very well have been lost.



"Wait a minute....I think that bug is bugged!"

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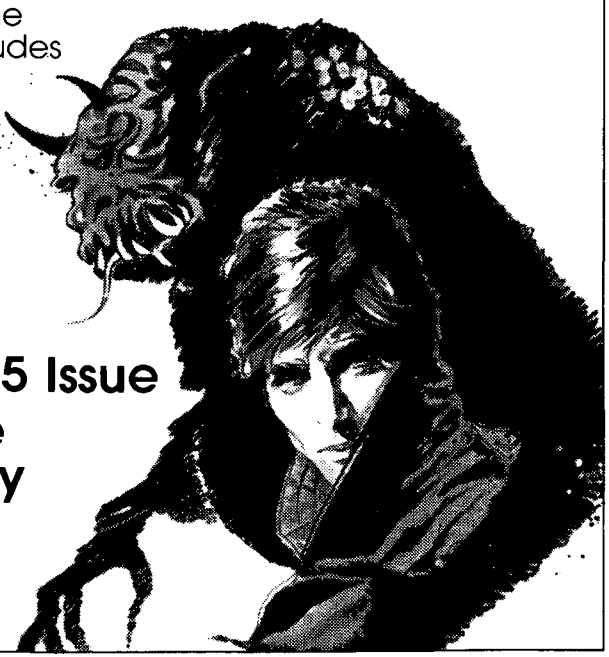
ESPIONAGE
MAGAZINE

Coming Next Issue...

MORRIS HERSHMAN
Proof Negative
JOHN LUTZ
On Judgment Day
JOSH PACHTER
Message From Lowanda
ISAK ROMUN
Dinner In The Upper Latitudes



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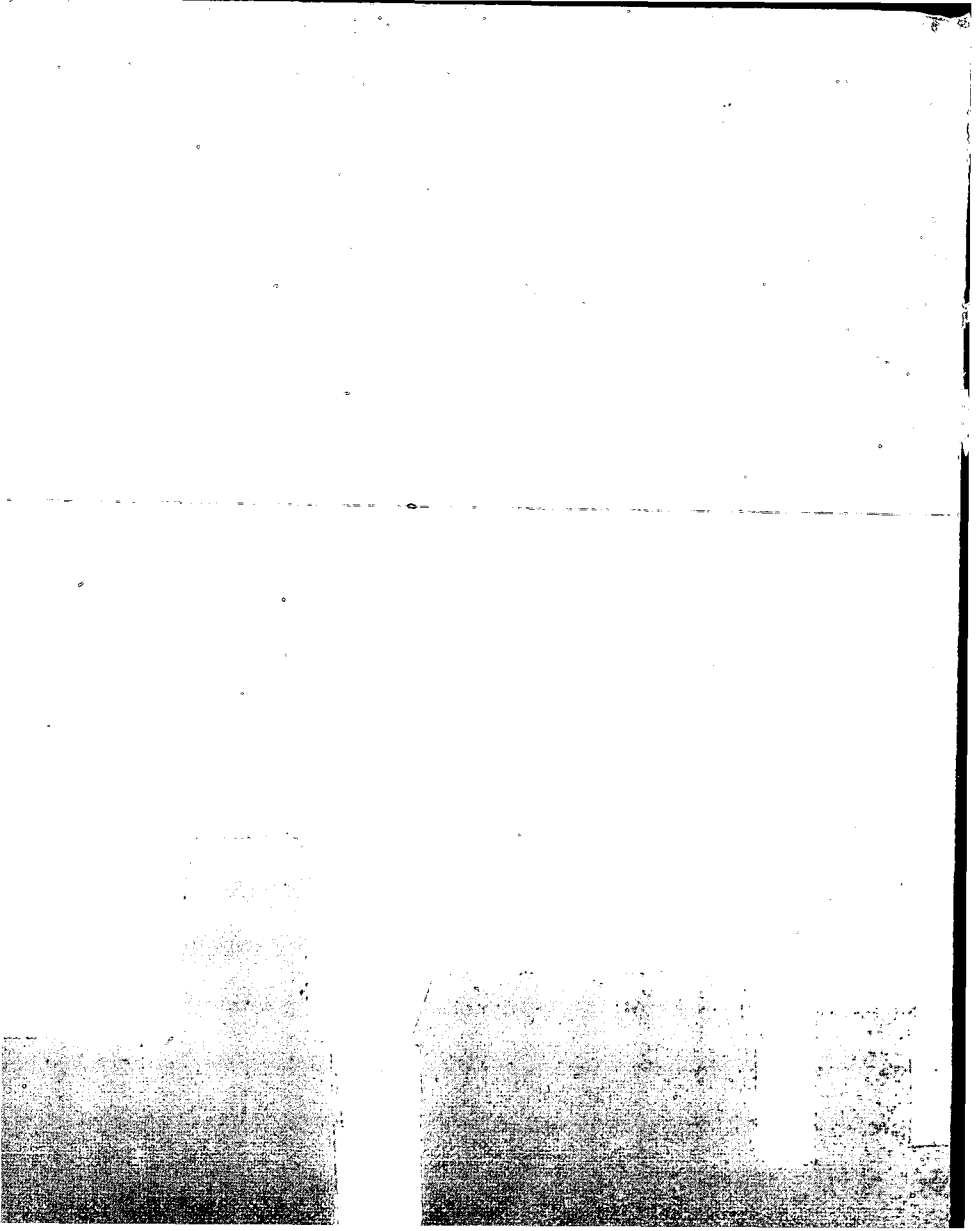

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